A WINDOW OPEN ON THE WORLD

The UNESCO Courier

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VELAZQUEZ

SELF-PORTRAIT OF VELAZQUEZ. Detail of "The Maids of Honour" (Las Meninas). This is the only authenticated self-portrait of the artist. Painted in 1656. Prado Museum, Madrid.

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Special colour issue

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COVER PHOTO

Portrait of a Girl, thought to have been painted by Velazquez about 1648 and now in the Collection of the New York Hispanic Society. All colour photographs in this issue are published by courtesy of Publications Filmées d'Art et d'Histoire (See note page 32)

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VELAZQUEZ

PAINTER OF LIFE

by Pierre Luent

On August 30, 1623, while Madrid drowsed in the relentless heat, a group of men walked briskly through the galleries and cool rooms of the royal palace which led to the King's chambers. At their head strode a dark young man whose long upturned moustache emphasized a strong, tip-tilted nose. His long black hair fell in waves over a collar of white lace. His eyes sparkled under strongly marked brows and his cool manner gave no hint that in the next few minutes his whole future would be decided.

The doors of the royal chamber opened and Don Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez was ushered in. The young man knelt and bowed his head. When he rose, he saw before him for the first time, King Philip IV of Spain.

Don Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez was born in

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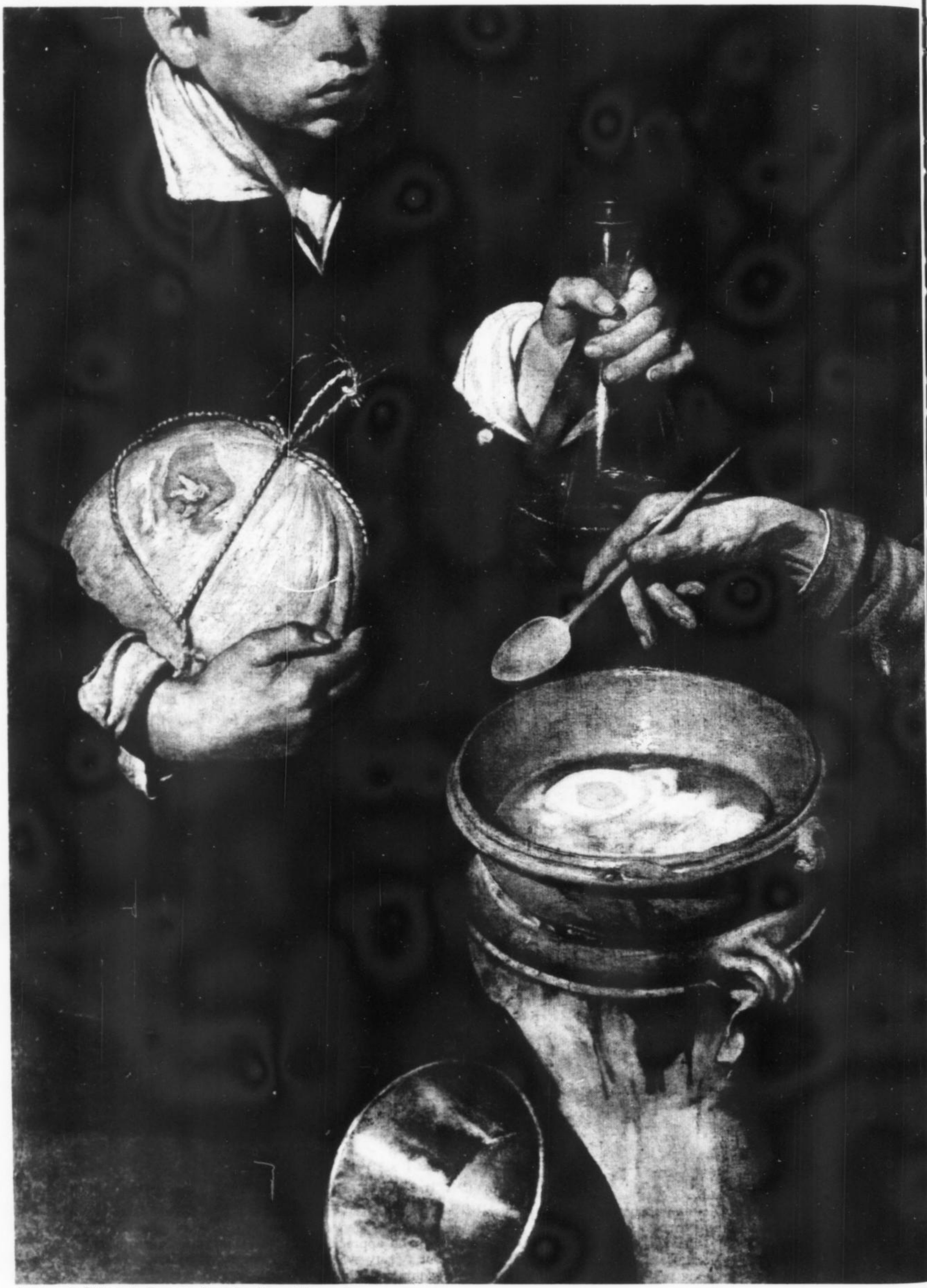
Anderson © Editions du Dimanche, from the album "Velazquez"

THE OLD COOK. "I should prefer to be the leading painter of what are considered common subjects than the second-best of the refined", Velazquez is said to have declared. The great Spanish artist is generally known as a painter of the Court in the 17th century and of dainty little princesses. But he was an artist who appreciated life in all its forms even the most humble. As a youth he painted kitchen scenes and peasants. He was about twenty when he completed "The Old Cook" (sometimes called "The Omelette") bringing a strange beauty to these familiar objects with a skill already remarkable. (See detail page 6)



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A career of genius begins in the uproar and disorder of a Seville art academy

Seville on Sunday June 6, 1599, in a small house on the narrow, twisting Calle de la Gorgoja, in the parish of San Pedro. In the middle of the previous century, a Portuguese gentleman, Don Diego Rodriguez de Silva, together with his wife Dona Ana and his son Juan left the town of Oporto and settled in Seville. There Juan married Dona Jeronima Velazquez y Buen Rostro, niece of an aristocratic lady. The child of this marriage was Don Diego Velazquez.

His first years were spent in the San Pedro district among the rambling streets, the whitewashed houses huddled together in an incredible jumble with their little shady patios and their azulojos which emphasized the hues of the jasmines and carnations planted there.

His parents were well-to-do but far from rich, and had originally planned that Don Diego should study law. But although proficient in philosophy and Latin, the boy revealed a passion for something quite different: drawing. At first his father took this for no more than a child's simple amusement but he soon realized that it was something much deeper and accordingly decided to send his son to the studio of the great Francisco de Herrera.

This was a strange studio: classes were held amidst the wildest disorder and uproar, dominated by the piercing voice of the Master who delivered insults and blows generously and indiscriminately with his cane which was conveniently tipped with a piece of charcoal for drawing.

The following year, Don Diego, then barely twelve entered the school of another master, Don Francisco Pacheco, whose lessons were given with much more discrimination and method. Little Diego's neighbour and fellow pupil was a certain Zurbaran, who was also destined to make a name for himself and who became Diego's life-long friend.

In 1617, Pacheco felt that the child prodigy Velazquez had learned enough to be awarded the diploma entitling him to exercise the profession of painter. But Pacheco did much more than give him a diploma. He also gave him his daughter. In 1618, in the Church of St. Michel, Diego Velazquez married the gentle and charming Juana Pacheco—further evidence of the Master's great confidence in his pupil's future.

In 1622, Velazquez decided to try his fortune in Madrid. The prospects were favourable: he had friends at Court, among them Juan de Fonseca, Luis de Gongora and the Duke of Olivares. But his first stay there led to nothing and Diego was unable to achieve his ambition to paint the King's portrait. Unable to obtain access to the King, he painted the portrait from memory and then returned to Seville. The following year, however, he received a letter from Fonseca with an order from the Duke of Olivares, at that time the King's favourite, instructing him to return to Madrid. Accompanying the letter was the tidy sum of fifty crowns.

The young man lost no time in presenting himself at the "Corte" in Madrid. He was accompanied by his father-in-law and his half-Moorish servant Juan Pareja who was also his pupil and friend. Within a few days of his arrival he had painted Fonseca's portrait. A friend of the latter showed it to the King who found it magnificent and expressed the wish to meet the artist.

This was the first meeting between the twenty-four-year-old painter and the seventeen-year-old King. Philip IV was not handsome but Velazquez gave nobility and dignity to his stern and melancholy countenance. The King was so pleased with the portrait that he at once ordered a second, this time full-length. This was followed by portraits of other members of the royal family, of the Duke of Olivares and even of the Prince of Wales, the future Charles I of England who was in Madrid at the time. The King granted Velazquez a stipend of twenty ducats per month. Though he had not yet made his fortune, Velazquez nonetheless brought his family to Madrid.

He began to attract attention. One day he exhibited an equestrian portrait of the King in the Calle Mayor. The painting caused a sensation and aroused some envy. Criticism was levelled at the shape of the horse ! On one occasion, the King himself told him slyly, "I have heard that you can only paint heads", to which Diego replied, "Your Majesty flatters me; personally, I know no one capable of painting them!"

He painted a good many other heads for all that. In particular, he did the portrait of the strange child, Don Carlos, the King's brother, whom he showed with a cape on his shoulder, the collar of the Golden Fleece on his breast and capriciously holding a glove by the finger. What Velazquez was able to catch—and it is an indication of the mastery over his art which he already possessed—was the Prince's strange expression, his calm disdainful attitude.

In 1627, the King decided to make Velazquez an usher; but according to court customs he could only be paid a salary corresponding to the lowest category of palace employees.

The following year he met Rubens who was passing through Madrid. The two artists compared their aesthetic ideas. One day Rubens described a Bacchic Flemish festival. The subject appealed to Velazquez—but not in the Rubens manner. It resulted in *El Dios Baco,* the God Bacchus, which was purchased by the King for one hundred silver ducats. But the painter did not invent figures dressed in the style of Sophocles. He took his inspiration from the taverns of Madrid and the common people, and with a true understanding of the significance of the picture, he gave it the name which it still bears today—*Los Borrachos,* the drunkards or drinkers. It was, in fact, a portrayal of a group of drunkards seen through the eyes of a man who never got drunk.

This was Velazquez's first period. It was one of vigour, solidity, where dark hues and chiaroscura were used to provide relief. He stripped his subjects like a child taking a toy apart to see what lies inside. At this time he was still at the stage of analyzing; later, possessed of all the necessary elements he was to combine them in his works of synthesis.

Not satisfied with buying "*Los Borrachos*" for one hundred ducats, the King paid him another three hundred as arrears of salary. For Velazquez, the total represented two year's salary. Instead of devoting the sum to his family, the painter took the advice of his father-in-law and of Rubens and set off for Italy to see the masterpieces of that country and learn everything he could. He left Madrid on August 10, 1629, with the faithful Pareja, his pocket the heavier by two hundred ducats which the Duke of Olivares had given him as a parting gift.

During the journey he met the renowned General Ambrosio de Spinola. This was a Genoese soldier who had

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'Imitate nothing and nobody... paint all things as you see them'

fought in Flanders in the service of Spain and received the surrender of Breda. Velazquez was much taken with his pleasant personality and his intelligence. Later on, he included the General's portrait from memory in his famous painting, *The Surrender of Breda.*

Velazquez then spent a period at the Villa Medici. Amidst the reminders of classical times he returned to mythology and painted *Vulcan's Forge,* abounding in irony but also in life: every figure possessed its own individuality and expression and every object its form and volume.

In 1630 he returned to Spain. Henceforward he had no more doubts. His study of the Italian masterpieces had confirmed him in his vocation: "Imitate nothing and nobody, paint men and things as you see them."

This was Velazquez's great period as a portraitist. His works reached such a pitch of realism that there is an anecdote about Philip IV entering the painter's studio and seeing the face of Admiral Pulido Pareja in the shadows. "What's this," the King is said to have exclaimed "are you still here? I thought you'd left." Then, realizing that he had spoken to a portrait, the King remarked to the painter, "I assure you I really was taken in!"

VELAZQUEZ painted the court jesters and his daughter, Juana Velazquez. He also painted a number of religious subjects at the urging of several devout members of the court: *The Visit of Saint Anthony to Saint Paul* was one; Another was *Christ on the Cross,* painted about 1630. Although painted by an artist who scarcely ever touched religious themes, it is perhaps the most remarkable and profound religious painting of the century.

Memories of his journey through Italy led him to paint the portrait of General Spinola and various other persons in the *Surrender of Breda,* also known as *The Lances.*

But Velazquez was now back in Madrid; and the background of his picture is not the landscape of the Netherlands but the country around the Corte. In spite of this, the picture is one of the most valued works of its kind.

In 1643, Don Gaspar de Guzman, Duke of Olivares, Velazquez's patron, who was not liked by the Queen, fell into disgrace. All his protegés at the Court departed but the King kept the painter with him. He even acquainted him with his ambition to create a gallery which should assemble works by all the greatest Spanish masters. Velazquez at once suggested that he should also acquire some of the best paintings of the Italian masters and requested permission to go to Italy to buy them.

BUT grave events were taking place in Madrid. First, the Queen died; then Prince Balthazar Carlos, the King's only son, died at seventeen on the eve of his wedding to his cousin, Mariana of Austria. Some years later, and in order to solve the political problem caused by these deaths, Philip IV decided to marry his son's fiancée. He sent an emissary to Trento to meet his fiancée on her way to Spain.

This was Velazquez's long-awaited opportunity to leave Madrid. After a difficult journey he reached Genoa with the faithful Juan de Pareja and, leaving the other members of the mission, travelled to Milan where he studied the famous *Last Supper* of Leonardo da Vinci; then he passed through Padua and reached Venice where he bought five pictures for Philip IV. Next he visited Florence and Rome and then Naples.

At this point Pope Innocent X who had been Nuncio in Madrid asked Velazquez to paint his portrait. Diego who saw a resemblance between the Sovereign Pontiff and Juan de Pareja, painted a portrait of the latter by way of preparation. The result was brilliant and Velazquez ventured to present it to the Pope. Another masterpiece had been created: the brilliant gaze, the chiaroscura, the details, the wrinkles—everything combined to form an immediate revelation of character.

This was the painter's second period. He was still analysing but he was also interpreting. Innocent X, contrary

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to all expectations, was highly pleased with the picture and made a gift to Velazquez of a gold chain and a medal engraved with his likeness.

When Velazquez returned to Madrid there was no shortage of work. Philip IV had commandeered the painter from the moment of his return. Portraits were wanted of the new Queen, Mariana of Austria, of the aging King himself and of the Infanta Margarita.

Velazquez had become such an important figure at Court that he requested and obtained the post of King's Harbinger, his duties being to prepare the monarch's lodgings during his travels.

But he continued to paint and devoted himself in particular to the court jesters: Barbarroja, Don John of Austria, Don Antonio the Englishman and others. These were a humorist's canvasses, like the portrait of Mars, God of War, who was none other than a blustering rogue of Seville; for under the influence of the literature of the day, Velazquez sometimes dealt with mythology and the pagan gods whom he portrayed not as gods but as men.

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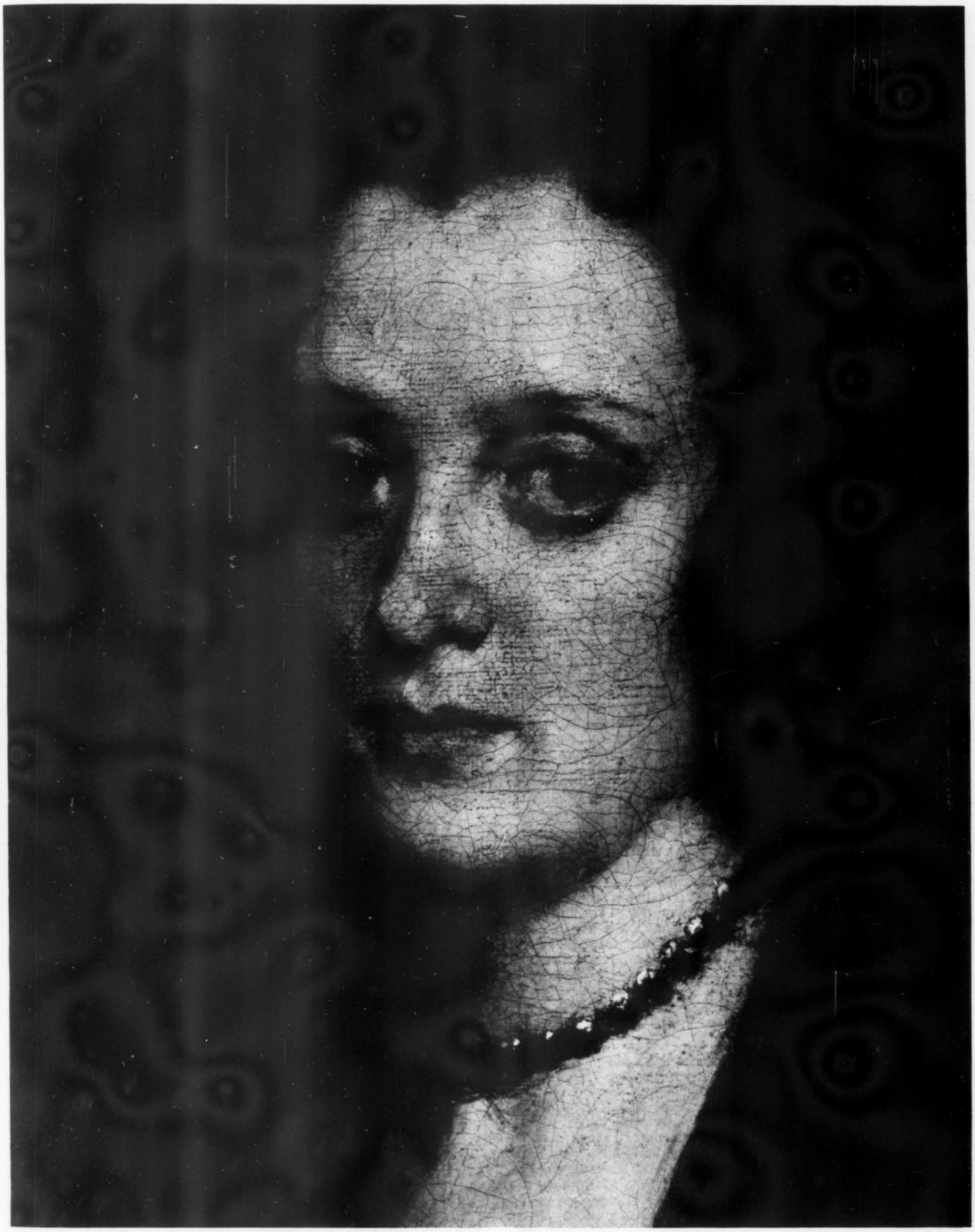


Wallace Collection. © Editions du Dimanche, from the album "Velazquez"

LADY WITH A FAN. This portrait painted by Velazquez between 1644 and 1648 has been called "a supreme representation of the Spanish woman". It was once thought that Velazquez used his daughter as a model for this work, but nowadays it is generally agreed that the portrait is of an unknown woman. The grave reticent expression, the mysterious, languid eyes reveal Velazquez's remarkable gift for probing beyond the human features in his deep search of the underlying character. In this painting, justly considered one of Velazquez's masterpieces, sober browns and greys harmonize perfectly with the luminous tints of the skin and the black shawl and dress.

PAINTER OF LIFE *(Cont'd from page 8)*

Nevertheless the painter remained faithful to his ideal: to paint the truth, the reality of life. A striking example is seen in the famous picture *The Spinners*, painted at the time of the setting-up of the royal tapestry works. Perfectly composed, his figures are natural and their attitudes denote a complete freedom of movement. The play of light is varied, in direction and intensity; and the whole gives an impression of depth and space. The viewer feels that Velazquez has not grouped figures on a canvas but that his observer's eye has caught them, in an instant of reality.

It was not long before the King expressed a wish to have a large family portrait and it was now that Velazquez produced what is undoubtedly—and rightly—his most celebrated work: *The Maids of Honour* (*Las Meninas*).

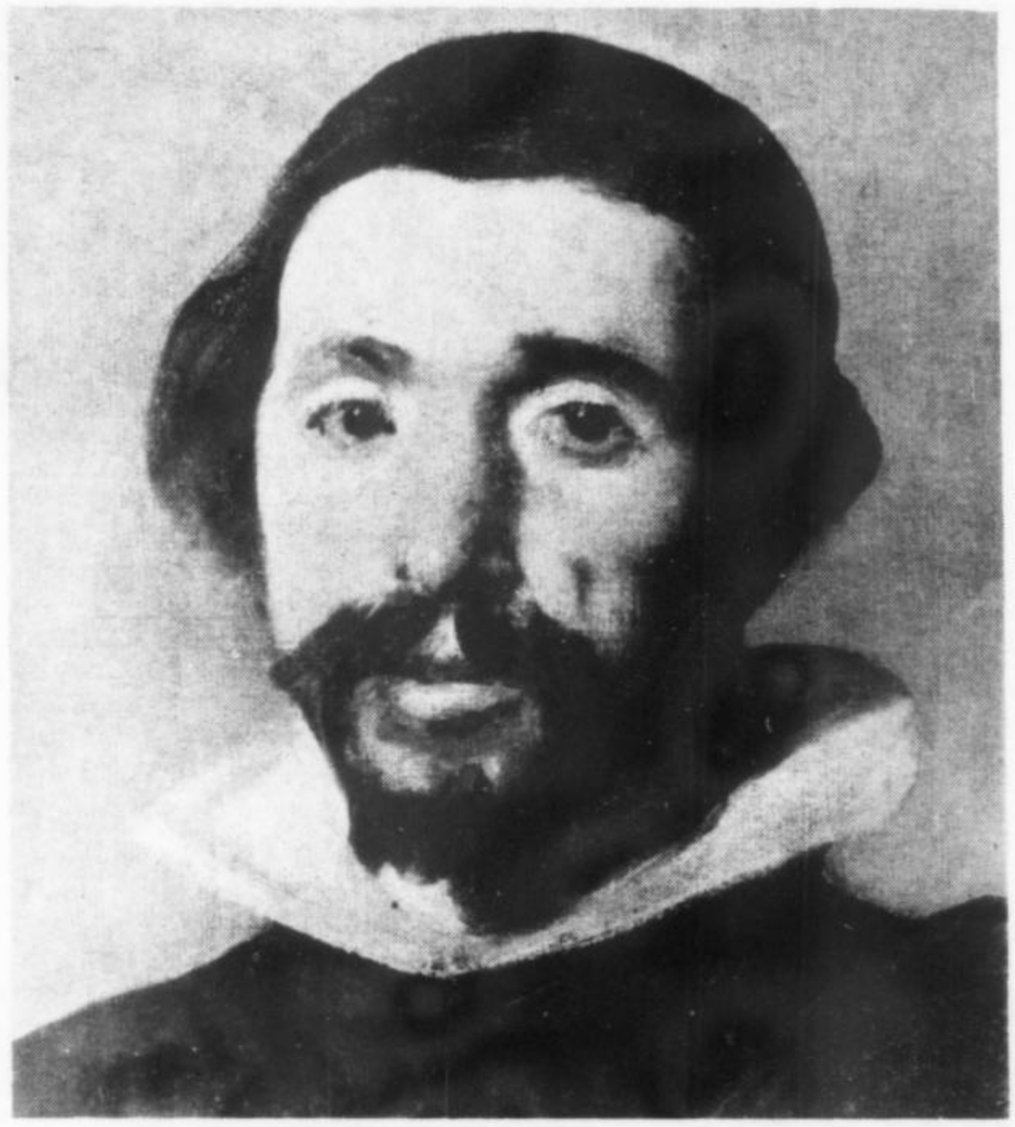
The King and the Queen have taken up their position in front of the painter. Beside Velazquez is the Infanta Margarita and her little retinue of jesters and companions; the painter appears at the left of the canvas, brush in hand; he is looking at the King and Queen who are seen in the background reflected in a looking-glass; in the foreground is the Infanta, flanked by two maids of honour, Agustina Sarmiento and Isabel de Velasco. Further to the right, the dwarf Maribarbola looks at the rulers and the dwarf Nicolasillo Pertusato slyly kicks a dog asleep in the foreground. In the shadows, the lady-in-waiting Dona Marcela de Ulla dressed as a nun whispers to a squire. Finally, right in the background and framed by a doorway, the Queen's Harbinger, Don José Nieto de Velasco, looks on.

EACH face reflects a different thought, each costume and object has its own colour, altered by the reflection of the neighbouring object. The feeling of space and depth is as marked as with *The Spinners*. Velazquez had gone beyond the limits known in this field at the time. And here again he painted what he saw. The Flemish primitives too had painted things exactly as they were but all with the same wealth of detail, whether in the foreground or the background. It was not enough to paint things smaller when they were further away. It was also necessary to include fewer details. In this picture Velazquez went beyond his own technique and reached the culminating point of his art. This was his last period: for the beholder, the artist's "synthesis", "reality" was transformed into illusion, the illusion of naturalness, space, life and light.

Henceforth the artist was at the height of his fame. The King made him a Knight of the Order of Santiago in 1659 after having ennobled him. Velazquez's last years were drawing close. The painter returned to religious themes with the *Coronation of the Virgin* where he seems to have been inspired by El Greco. He also painted the portrait of his friend, the sculptor Alonso Cano, and his last portrait of all, the Infanta Margarita.

HE made one last voyage. In 1660 Velazquez set off for the French frontier where, on June 1, on the Ile des Faisans, in the middle of the Bidassoa River, Philip IV met Louis XIV. The voyage was an exhausting one over rain-soaked roads. On June 26, the King's Harbinger returned to Madrid. He was 61 years old. Weary from working all day and moving about all night, as he wrote to a friend, Velazquez was obliged to take to his bed on July 31. Afflicted with "tertiary fever," he died on August 6, 1660 surrounded by his family, his closest friends and the inseparable Juan de Pareja.

Velazquez was given a full court funeral in the Church of St John the Baptist in Madrid where he was buried. The only people missing at this last tribute were members of the Chapter of the Knights of Santiago who had never welcomed him in their Order. It is said that the King revenged himself for this insult by having the great cross of Santiago painted in on the artist's doublet in *The Maids of Honour* so that he might wear it forever in the great masterpiece of his career.



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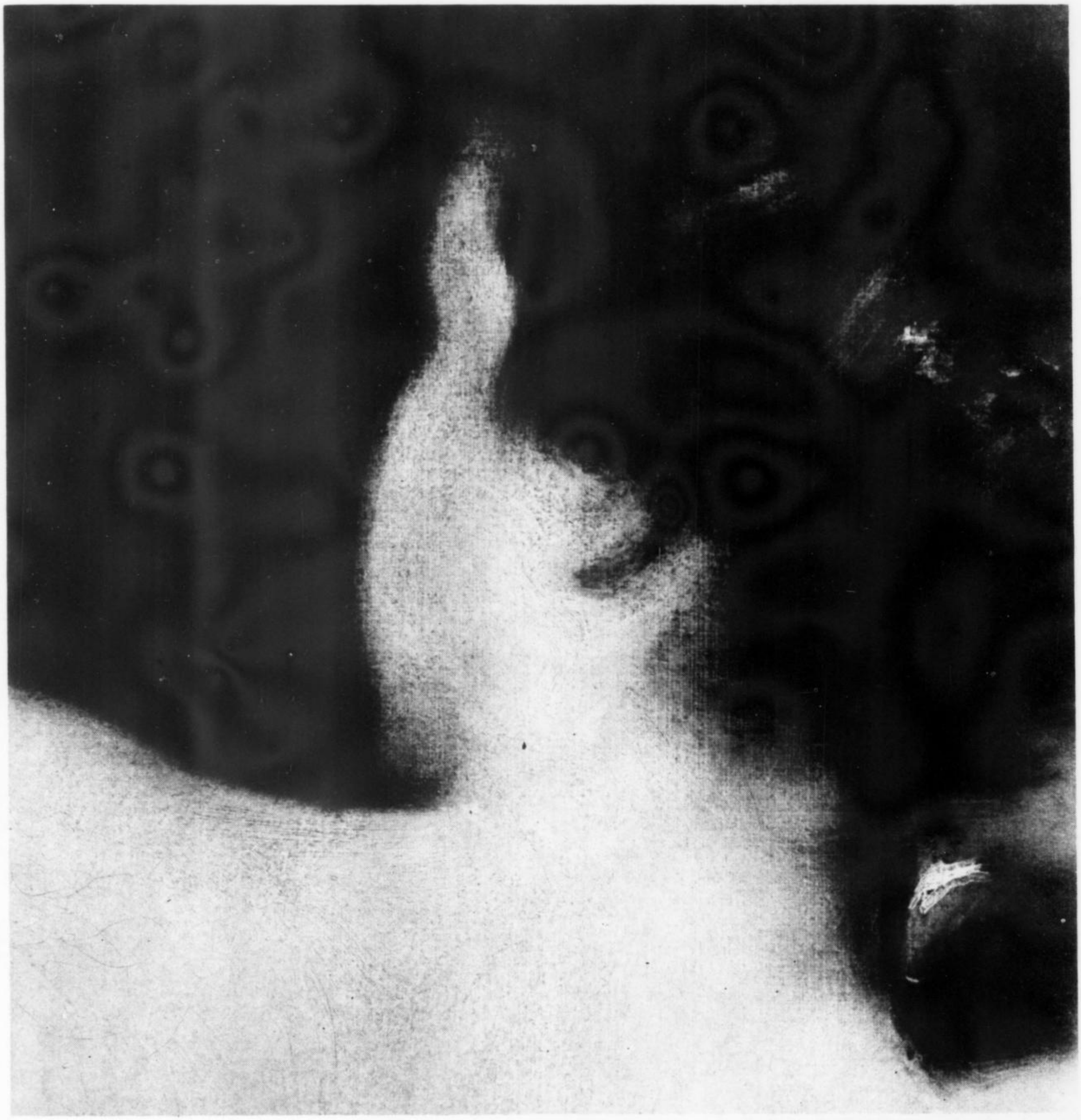
PABLO OF VALLADOLID. Once believed to be the portrait of an actor, this painting is now recognized as that of Pablo of Valladolid, a jester at the Spanish Court. The true nature of the jester is strikingly depicted—a sad man whose haunting eyes betray his deep melancholy. 1633. Prado Museum.



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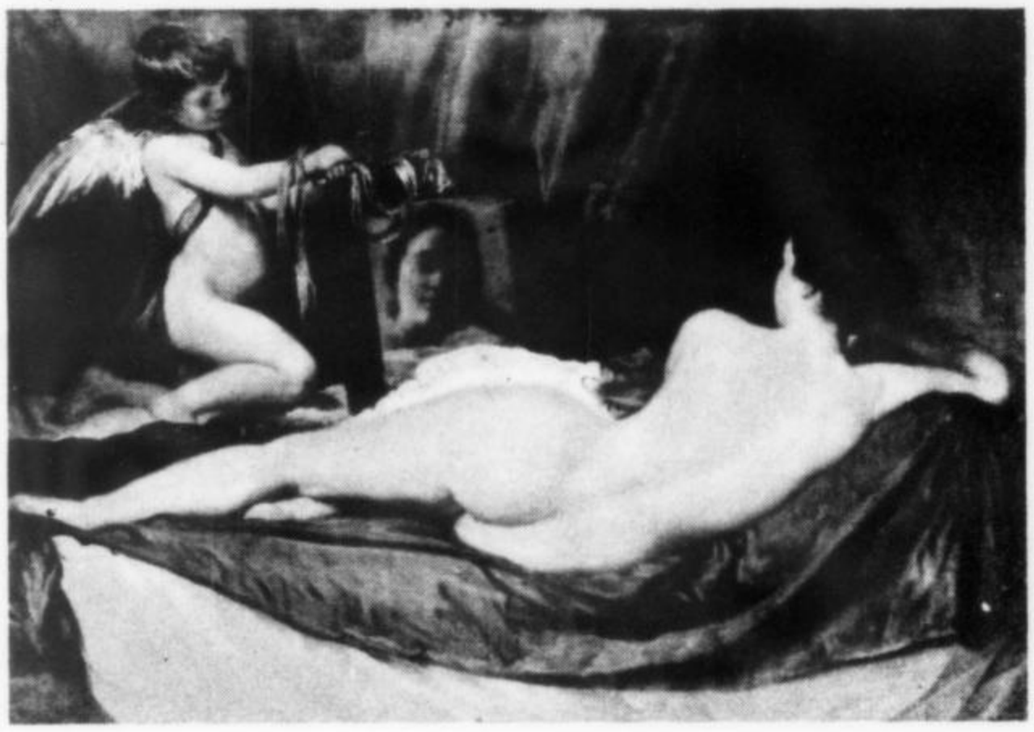
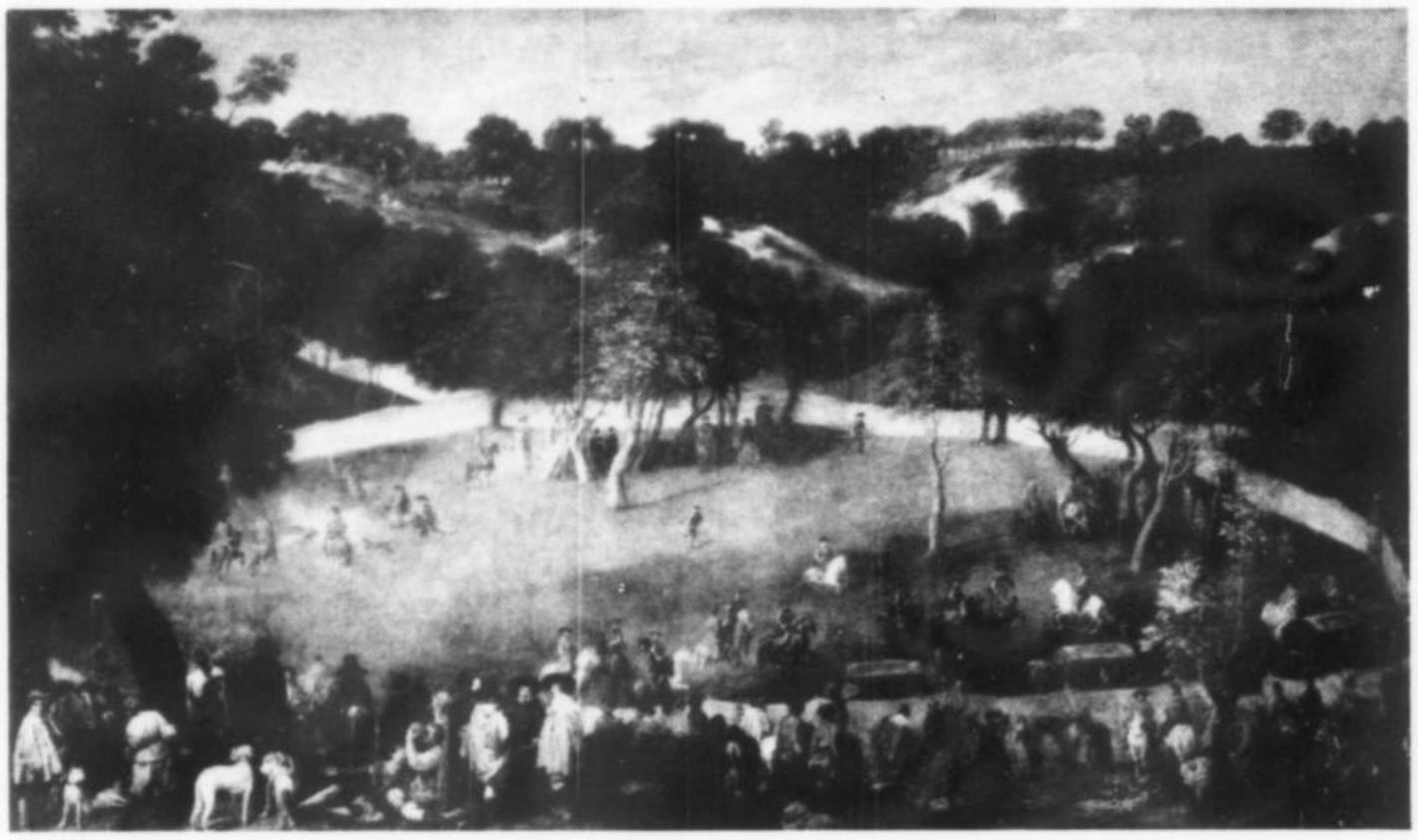
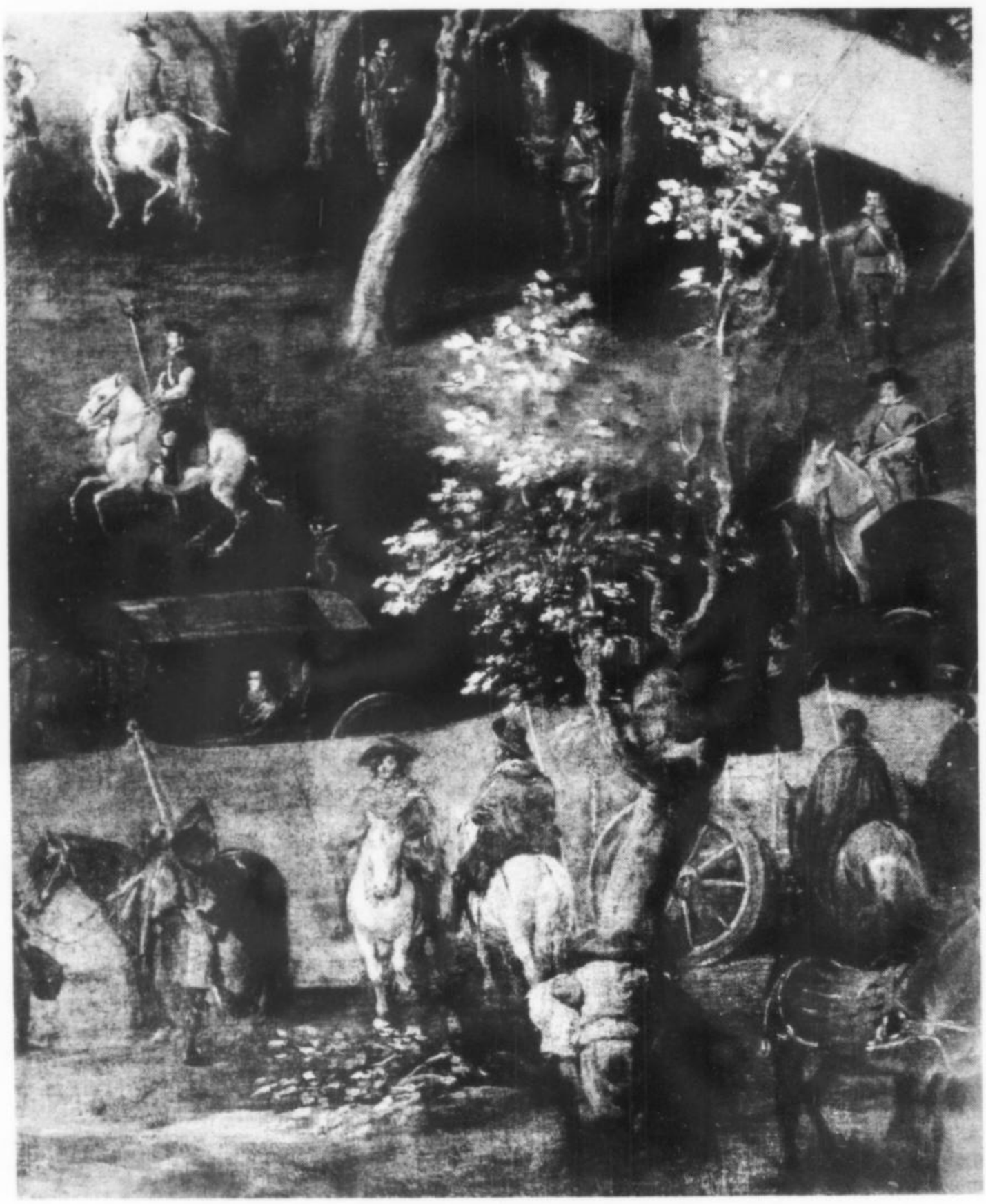


VENUS AND CUPID. Velazquez helped to lay the foundations of modern Impressionist painting. When, centuries later, the Impressionists made it their aim to study the effect of light and atmosphere, they turned to Velazquez who was hailed as their precursor. His modern treatment is strongly evident in this head of Venus, a detail of "Venus and Cupid" (right) where Velazquez did not depict the face of Venus directly, but revealed it as a faint and ghostly reflection in the mirror held by Cupid. This work is one of the mythological paintings executed by Velazquez. Several of the works perished in the fire which swept the Alcazar in 1734. "Venus and Cupid" was bought in 1905 for £45,000 by the National Gallery, London.

THE ROYAL CANVAS





National Gallery © Editions du Dimanche, from the album "Velazquez"

THE BOAR HUNT. In Velazquez's day, the three great annual hunts of the Spanish court were the occasion for entertainments and tournaments in which luxury and fanciful costumes and decorations were displayed with the greatest possible ostentation. About 1640 the observant eye and dextrous brush of Velazquez recorded the thousand and one colourful and dramatic details of one of these hunts as King Philip IV and his nobles pitted their skill with lance and horse against the fiercest boars that could be found in the kingdom. His finished work (above left) was a monumental composition measuring about ten feet by four. In it he depicted more than one hundred figures from the king, being watched by the queen and her ladies seated in their carriages (detail left) to the crowd of huntsmen, peasants, beggars and other lookers on (above). Velazquez painted other scenes of the chase, but many were destroyed in the fire which ravaged the Alcazar palace in the 18th century. The Boar Hunt, also damaged in the fire, was copied by Goya and then offered as a present by Ferdinand VII of Spain to Sir Richard Wellesley, the British Ambassador. National Gallery, London.

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THE PAINTER WITH THE HUMAN TOUCH

by Enrique Lafuente Ferrari
Director, Museum of Modern Art, Madrid

This year, the world celebrates the three hundredth anniversary of the death of one of the greatest artists Europe has known: the Spanish painter Diego de Silva y Velazquez.

Velazquez was a precocious child whose interest in art showed itself early and he began his apprenticeship when only ten. But even during his formative years, Velazquez revealed that he had rejected the artistic conventionalism of his times. The ideal of the Renaissance, conceived by Italian genius, had ushered in a period during which art had as its aim the representation of Beauty, the creation of a world peopled by lovely and perfect creatures not to be met with in this life.

But for Velazquez only life was of any interest, the life of reality, humble and prosaic, the visual world before our eyes. And he set about to perpetuate this world in his works of art. His was a radical departure in the very conception of painting.

Velazquez was no lover of rhetoric or the mere anecdote: he preferred the modest and serious prose of everyday life. It was for this reason that even as a young man he devoted himself to the painting of still life and portraits. And when subjects from the Christian iconography such as *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* were proposed to him, he departed from tradition and painted a kitchen in the foreground, putting the main theme itself into the distant background, reducing it to its most human dimensions.

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Photos Anderson © Editions du Dimanche, from the album "Velazquez"

COURT DWARFS AND JESTERS

Within the grandeur and pomp of the court of Philip IV lived a strange little world of deformed people who wandered about the palace and often found their way into the studio of the King's painter. To Velazquez they offered ideal models for experimenting freely with his views on the techniques of painting. Ortega y Gasset has even declared that these portraits of dwarfs and jesters are among the painter's best works. Velazquez did not believe that the values most often praised, such as beauty, strength and wealth, were the most worthy. Above these and more intensely deep and moving he felt was the value of ordinary life which he saw as far more sad and dramatic. That is why the negative aspects of these misshapen creatures emerge in his paintings here with positive values. Portrait on opposite page is that of Menippus, the Greek cynic and satirist, for which Velazquez used an unknown model of seedy appearance. This often-reproduced work was a companion piece for his portrait of Aesop.

Photos Anderson © Editions du Dimanche, album "Velazquez"

Prado Museum, Madrid

LAS MENINAS. "What realism! What a magnificent achievement!" Picasso exclaimed years before he began his series of paintings directly inspired by this great masterpiece. When Theophile Gautier first saw the work in the Prado he cried out: "This is no painting; it is life perpetuated." Velazquez's picture of the royal princess and her entourage is in fact one of the most remarkable paintings of all times. And like many of the artist's great works it is a paradox of art. When we gaze at it from a distance it appears as an extremely precise, realistic work which gives an extraordinary feeling of depth; but if we approach closely the realism evaporates and we behold an ethereal fantasy. Here the central figure of the Infanta Margarita is merely suggested with rare touches of pigment that gives an impressionistic atmosphere to the flesh and clothes. Amazingly enough, Velazquez achieved this magic with surprisingly few brushstrokes—"No one has painted a subject with fewer," Ortega y Gasset once remarked.

 (Cont'd from page 14)

'Avant-garde' in audacity

What attracted him most in portrait painting was the opportunity to penetrate the mystery of life and to capture the human personality of the individual. He found no pleasure in constructing his compositions analytically but strove rather for the total impression conveyed by colour and atmosphere.

In 1621 Spain had a young king on the throne, Philip IV, who had inherited from his father the greatest empire in the world. But Spain was exhausted by the frequent wars it had waged in Europe and its far-flung Empire was already showing signs of weakness. In Velazquez's time, during the seventeenth century, this had become accentuated and Spanish political superiority was being replaced by that of France and England. And yet it was in this century that Spain produced her greatest writers, poets and artists; happily genius does not depend on political power.

Thanks to the help of the Duke of Olivares, Minister of Philip IV, the descendant of a family of Seville, Velazquez was given an opportunity to paint a portrait of the King in 1623. Charmed by Velazquez's talent, the King appointed him to be his official painter. From then on he was to paint not kitchens but princes, yet he made no concessions in his aesthetic principles. He remained faithful to his purpose—to immortalize the individual and life around him.

As a painter, Velazquez, never allowed himself to be dazzled by social rank and devoted his art to what Unamuno called "the man of flesh and bone." He refused to flatter his royal models, and portrays them as ordinary human beings no different from the rest of us. In his extraordinary series of portraits the models appear both miraculously alive and simple, their personalities strikingly individualized and each portrait endowed with that mysterious "presence" and reality which he managed to bring to all his works of art.

He painted not only the great nobility but also the unfortunate and the lowly, the rogues and buffoons, the half-witted and demented, whom the kings accepted in their palaces in surprising contrast to the life of luxury of the Court. For these humble and monstrous people Velazquez set about his canvasses with the same grave respect for their human dignity as he did for his noble subjects: in his approach to the mystery of the social and physical inequality of man he maintained the profound feeling that all men are intrinsically equal in the face of life itself. That is why men of all races and of all conditions understand and appreciate him so easily.

Velazquez is the most human of painters because he neither embellishes nor beautifies what he sees; he captures the essentials with a technique all his own; his sober, unassuming compositions reveal not only the physical appearance of his models, but their attitude and bearing and the atmosphere surrounding them, in which each figure lives.

Velazquez spent thirty-seven years with Philip IV, not only as his Court painter but as his friend, and thus received palace appointments rarely accorded to persons who did not belong to the upper classes of society. He was a calm man, taking no vanity from his success as an artist and his situation at the Court.

The only events of his life were two journeys to Italy, the country of art, in 1629 and 1649. During his second visit he was called upon to paint the portrait of Pope Innocent X, a painting which the English artist Reynolds esteemed as the "finest picture in Rome." But before painting the Pope he went into training by doing the portrait of his servant and pupil, the half-Moorish painter Juan de Pareja. This too is a masterpiece.

With an audacity that would mark him today as "avant-garde," Velazquez dared to declare in Italy that he saw nothing in Raphael, the great artist of the Renaissance, the painter of superhuman beauty admired by academic painters. Velazquez preferred Titian and the masters of the Venetian School, more akin to his own human art.

The portraits of Velazquez form an impressive gallery in which all levels of humanity are represented: King Philip IV and his two wives, Isabella of Bourbon and Mariana of Austria, the princes and princesses born of the two royal marriages, the two brothers of Philip IV, artists, poets and palace officials and, cheek by jowl, men and women of the people, cooks, street water vendors, women at their work, clowns, dwarfs and the insane ... His palette became gradually richer in tone, finally attaining a sober and exquisite harmony, as in the rose and silver of the portrait of Philip IV in the Frick Collection or in the children's portraits in the Vienna Museum.

Nevertheless, his most ambitious works were the large composition pictures in which he perfected his vision-synthesis technique with its "atmosphere", capturing the fleeting moment. One of the most remarkable is the *Surrender of Breda*. In the war of the Low Countries the Spanish army had succeeded in capturing the fort of Breda. Velazquez has chosen the moment when the conqueror receives the symbolic key from the vanquished general, both surrounded by their soldiers. Once again he gives us a lesson in humanity. Spinola, the victor, receives the defeated leader with courteous grace and, placing a friendly hand on the loser's shoulder, prevents him from kneeling, thus eliminating humiliation from the defeat. This interpretation is a lesson in "fair play" and elegance of spirit.

In the Palacio del Buen Retiro in Madrid *The Surrender of Breda* stood next to a group of equestrian portraits in which Velazquez is seen as the forerunner of modern landscape painting, with its distant views, coloured skies, the view upon the woods at Pardo and the snow-covered mountains around Madrid. His two views of the Villa Medici in Rome are landscapes even more modern in approach: here, using rapid brush strokes, the artist suggests the noonday sun on the distant cypress trees or the melancholy of an afternoon in the silent garden.

Towards 1656 he painted *Las Meninas,* an interior scene in which the intimate life of the Royal Palace is caught with the painter's habitual noble serenity. The picture shows the artist himself painting the Royal couple who can be seen in the background reflected in a mirror. But the real subject of the painting is the appearance in the room of a blond-haired child, the Infanta Margarita, accompanied by her maids of honour, her dwarfs and her dog.

Velazquez has here achieved a painting in which the lines vanish, leaving only a pure impression of light and colour. He succeeds in recreating for us, across the centuries, a passing instant of time, as if we had half-closed our eyes and found ourselves immersed within the confined space which gives the picture its unity.

The painting called *Las Hilanderas,* or the Spinners, in which the real protagonists are light and its gradations, produces a similar effect. A mythological subject had been proposed to Velazquez—the legend of Minerva and Arachne, rivals in the art of weaving—but he relegates the allusion, briefly, to the background and, taking his inspiration as ever from life, offers us what Ortega y Gasset calls his "logarithm of reality:" working women who are weaving and winding their thread in the foreground. Once again, as when he painted the kitchens of his youth, this painting, without precedent in the history of European art, immortalizes the work of women.

Velazquez abides by the world around him, the circumstances of mere existence, and he knows how to convert into a lofty art subjects considered until then unworthy of being painted on account of a false idea of artistic nobility and hierarchy which he refutes with his human painting that extracts poetry from the experience of pure visuality. That which man sees is what Velazquez judges worthy to receive artistic treatment in his works. This was his great feat, his modernity.

LAS MENINAS, painted in 1656, is considered by many critics as one of Velazquez's most remarkable paintings. This detail, which brings to mind Degas and Renoir, reveals why Velazquez is now called the great forerunner of the French Impressionist movement which reached its full flowering in the second half of the 19th century. Prado Museum.

THE SURRENDER OF BREDA, often known as "Las Lanzas" from the serried rank of lances breaking the sky. Painted about 1634-35, it shows the keys of the besieged city being handed to the victorious Spanish General, Marques Ambrosio de Spinola. The figure on the extreme right was once believed to be a self-portrait of Velazquez. This view is not shared today by all authorities. Now in the Collection of the Prado Museum.

THE DRINKERS. Group of peasants seen in this detail from "Los Borrachos" graphically expresses the wealth of humanity with which Velazquez imbued the profusion of subjects he found among humble people. Painted about 1628, the work is now in the Prado Museum.

HAND HOLDING A ROSE. Detail from a portrait of the Infanta Margarita, painted about 1659-60. For many years the painting was mistakenly believed to be a portrait of Dona Maria Teresa, the eldest daughter of Philip IV of Spain. Now in the Prado Museum.

Prado Museum, Madrid

LADIES OF THE FOUNTAIN. This charming detail from a large painting entitled "Fountain of the Tritons", is another illustration of Velazquez's amazingly modern technique. The blurred outlines of the two seated ladies in profile were achieved by the artist with quick daubs from his brush. As one approaches the painting, the forms melt into the background. This is one of the later works of Velazquez, and the detail might almost have come from the brush of Edouard Manet.

VELAZQUEZ AND MODERN ART

by Julian Gallego

Velazquez's most astonishing quality is that he makes us feel he belongs to our age. His pictures look as if they were fresh from the brush of a contemporary artist, and have nothing of the "period" atmosphere characteristic of galleries of old paintings. They would not be out of place in a Modern Art Museum. The only anachronism would be the clothes of the people he portrays, for naturally they are dressed in the style of 17th century Spain, the men in dark clothes with unobstrusive starched collars, the women in the voluminous skirts know as "farthingales," on which they rest their hands, surmounted by a bodice, bejewelled and colourful, their hair elaborately curled.

The costumes are, it is true, very alien to us; but because the faces and eyes of their wearers are still alive and full of expression, because the velvets and silks are still fresh, and because the whole scene is painted in bold technique with clear tones and free brush-work, we have the intriguing impression of watching the life of bygone centuries; it is as though a modern painter had been able, like the "Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court", to live in a past age, and had brought us back his impressions, seen through the eyes of modern man.

Examined in detail, many of Velazquez's pictures look like the work of an artist belonging to the Impressionist school, which flourished in France at the end of the 19th century, that is three hundred years after the birth of Velazquez. His landscapes of the Villa Medici in Rome,

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Diego's 17th Century 'New Look'

painted with broad strokes, and his figures, silhouetted by the light, might well be the work of Claude Monet. The strong drawing and the restrained expressive modelling of some of the heads—in *The Spinners* for example—remind us of certain portraits by Degas. The portraits of the Infanta Margarita, where the delicacy of the subject is matched by the freshness of the colours and the lustre of the sparkling brushwork might well belong to the same period as the best work of Auguste Renoir, whose *Germaine Laceu* with her spreading skirt and her bouquet is, as it were, an echo of Velazquez.

But the artist most profoundly influenced by Velazquez was Edouard Manet who declared, in his letters from Madrid, that he had discovered his ideal in painting in the pictures of the great Spaniard, the contemplation of whose work filled him with new hope and boundless confidence. Manet made a copy of the portrait of the buffoon Pabillos of Valladolid at the Prado, about which he said that the background melted away, leaving only the air surrounding the intensely alive figure; he imitated this picture in his famous *Fife-player,* by no means the only one of Manet's paintings which reveals the profound influence of Velazquez's technique, colour and handling of light.

Thus Velazquez could, without exaggeration, be called an "Impressionist" painter. His main concern in painting, as with Sisley or Monet, is to convey the impression of light, of light and air. He does not want his figures to be statues, but to give the effect of life and even movement at the touch of the light. Velazquez paints through his eyes alone. Though be began by painting figures and objects enclosed by the outline of the drawing, standing out solid and almost tangible—as Caravaggio had done in Italy—he soon realized that such strictly defined masses and shapes belonged to sculpture rather than to painting, and in painting that meant not to touch but to look at. He therefore felt that the visual element should predominate.

His pictures are like open windows: when we look, for instance, at the portrait of the Infante Baltasar Carlos on horseback, we seem to catch a breath of the pure air of the Guadarrama. This background of snowcapped mountains is executed with a few strokes, in tones so accurate as to give the impression of air and distance. In his late work, the painter uses touches of pure colour in juxtaposition which then blend in the eye of the spectator, a few yards away, to give the effect of vibrating light. That is why it is so interesting to look at Velazquez's masterpieces, such as *Las Meninas* and *The Spinners* or some of his late portraits at a close distance. We realize that neither flesh nor fabrics are ever painted in one colour.

Generally speaking, painters before Velazquez, and even his contemporaries, believed that the parts of an object in shadow were the same colour as those exposed to the light so that, for painting shadows, it was sufficient merely to add a little brown or "earth shadow pigment."

But Velazquez declared that the parts of an object in the light are not the same colour as the parts in shadow, since the colour is transformed by the atmosphere and the reflexion of other objects. He therefore mixed the colours for his shadows separately; and examined close to, every inch of fabric, flesh or air is seen to be composed of a variety of colours. Which is precisely what the Impressionists did, much later.

We observe in the works of old masters a disturbing lack of unity between figures and background: the people seem to be posing in front of a backdrop, as in old photographs. But Velazquez's pictures achieved visual unity, everything being equally important, and equally real. Figures in real life do not appear to be more strongly outlined than the surrounding scene. Velazquez is objective, putting down what he sees; and his objectivity, far from springing from any lack of inspiration, is a sign of genius.

The Impressionists and with them Paul Cezanne revolutionized contemporary art by attaching the same pictorial value to everything—a human head, a book, a fruit or a hat; but they were influenced considerably, in thus breaking down the hierarchical classification of natural objects, by the results of photography, which had just been invented.

In the middle of the 17th century, to see things as Velazquez saw them was not as natural as it appears to us now. Let me explain what I mean: though we *see* as our predecessors did, we now *look* at things differently. Seeing is natural, but looking is something that has to be learned. And artists as a rule are the people who teach us to look, to pick out, from amongst the lines of landscape or a figure, those which they consider essential; and to distinguish, amongst the infinite number of tones of light, those which correspond and harmonize with one another.

For example if, being acquainted with Chinese painting, we see a mountain landscape, our eyes will pick out certain details, the intersecting outlines of the rocks, the patches of fir-trees, and the landscape will seem to us to be carefully designed and harmonious just like a Chinese painting; if we are not familiar with Chinese painting it might well appear disordered and without form. Then again if after looking at the river scenes painted by the French Impressionists, we pass by a river one spring day, we shall discern certain tones of blue, white and pink and we shall say: "This river looks like a picture by Claude Monet."

So it is that artists teach us to look, and everyone is enriched by visiting art galleries. Everyone, that is, except the creators of a new way of looking. Velazquez, by taking the human figure, hitherto enclosed, and placing it in the full light, doing away with the conception of the background and, by subtle gradations of tone, making the air flow round the objects depicted, revolutionized not only painting but also our way of looking at things. It was this that caused the famous French critic, H. Taine, to write that in comparison with Velazquez's paintings all others looked lifeless and academic.

Another feature of Velazquez that makes him one of the painters closest to our understanding is his attention to "values." The term "value" in painting is used to denote the degree of lightness or darkness of the tone of objects, regardless of their colour. A yellow may have a lower value than a blue—as we shall see if we half close our eyes. This conception of values was unknown in Velazquez's day. It is for this reason that we find some of the works of great painters, even great colourists, unpleasing—there may be some object, a cloak for instance, which seems to be much nearer to our eye than the wearer, because its tone value is wrong.

Velazquez, though knowing nothing of this conception of values, nevertheless used them with such mastery that he sometimes painted pictures with very few colours—such as *Las Meninas,* for instances—which yet give the impression of being as highly coloured as a Rubens canvas. Picasso when he undertook recently to give his own interpretation of this famous picture worked mainly, in his most successful versions, on the basis of this subtle gradation of values, painting almost exclusively in shades of grey, the colour most characteristic of Velazquez's work.

Velazquez's greys shimmer and vibrate, so exquisitely subtle are their tones. There is no other painter to equal him in rendering the pearly lustre of the Madrid light reflected in the landscape and the skin of women. *Venus and Cupid* his sole and extremely chaste nude, is painted in greys and pinks; but the reclining figure stands out against a background of vivid green and red.

Velazquez was not afraid to use strong, warm tones. His portrait of Innocent X is a magnificent symphony in crimson. Like a Soutine, everything in this canvas is red, including the head of the Pontiff.

In his portraits of the Infanta Margarita (hanging in Madrid and Vienna), Velazquez's palette is so rich and varied that he surpasses even the Impressionists, coming closer to the painters of our day. The poetic vase of

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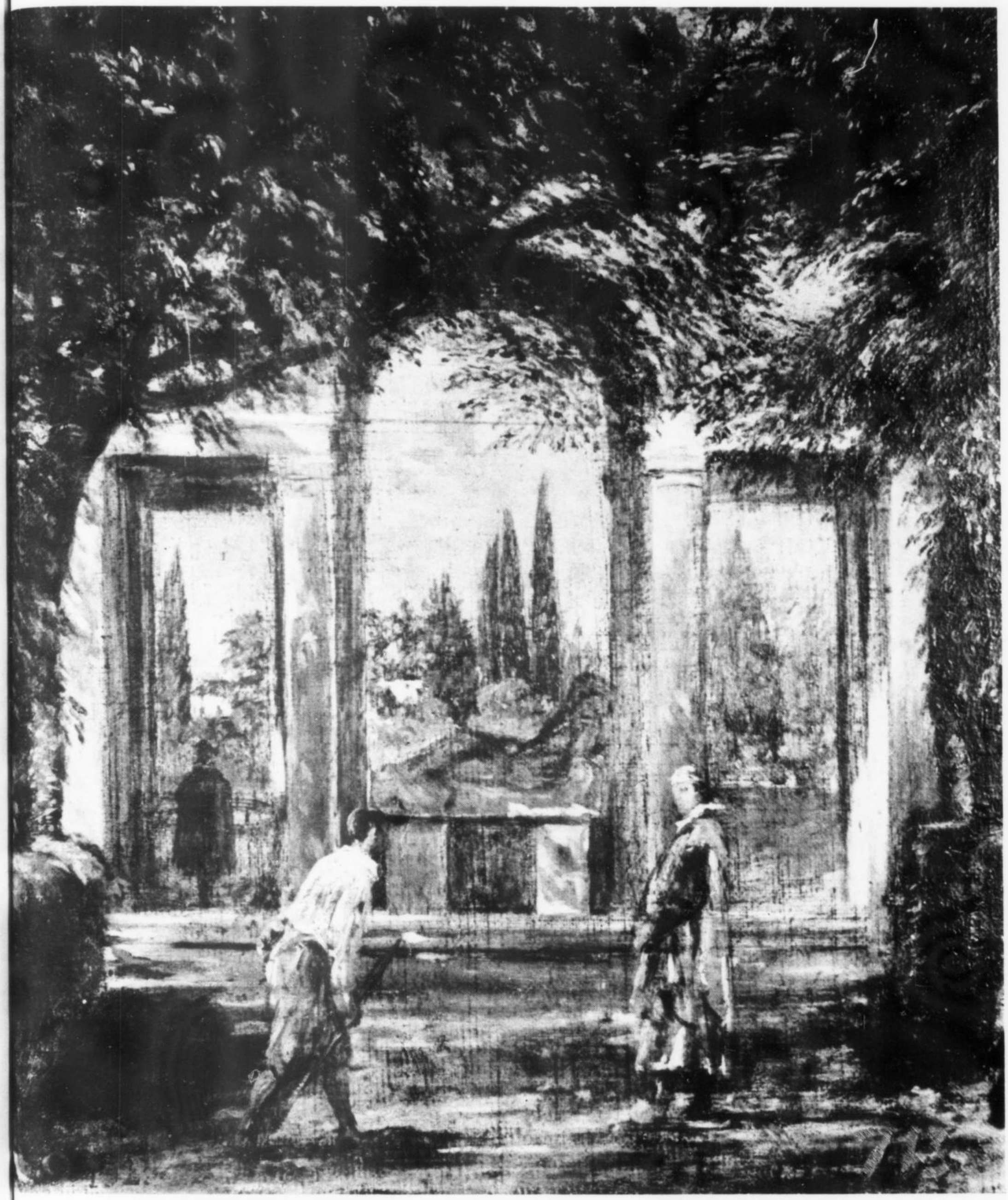

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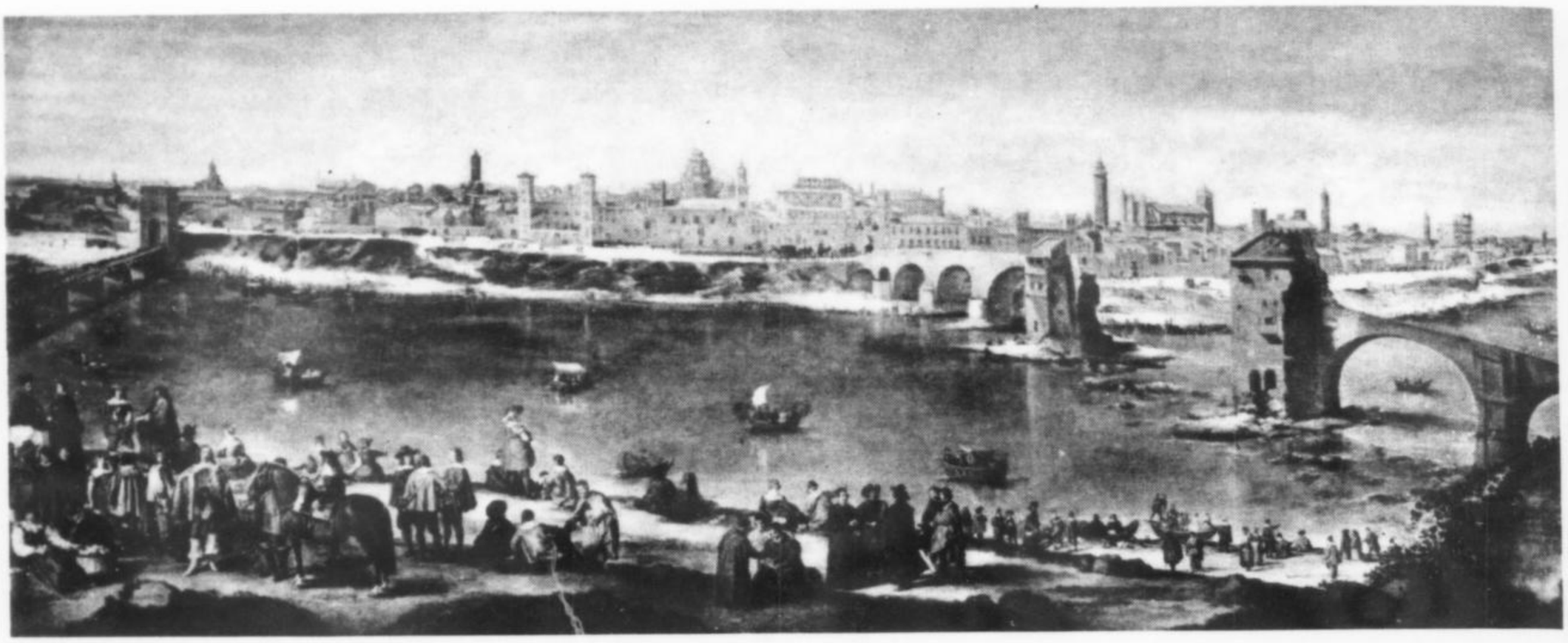
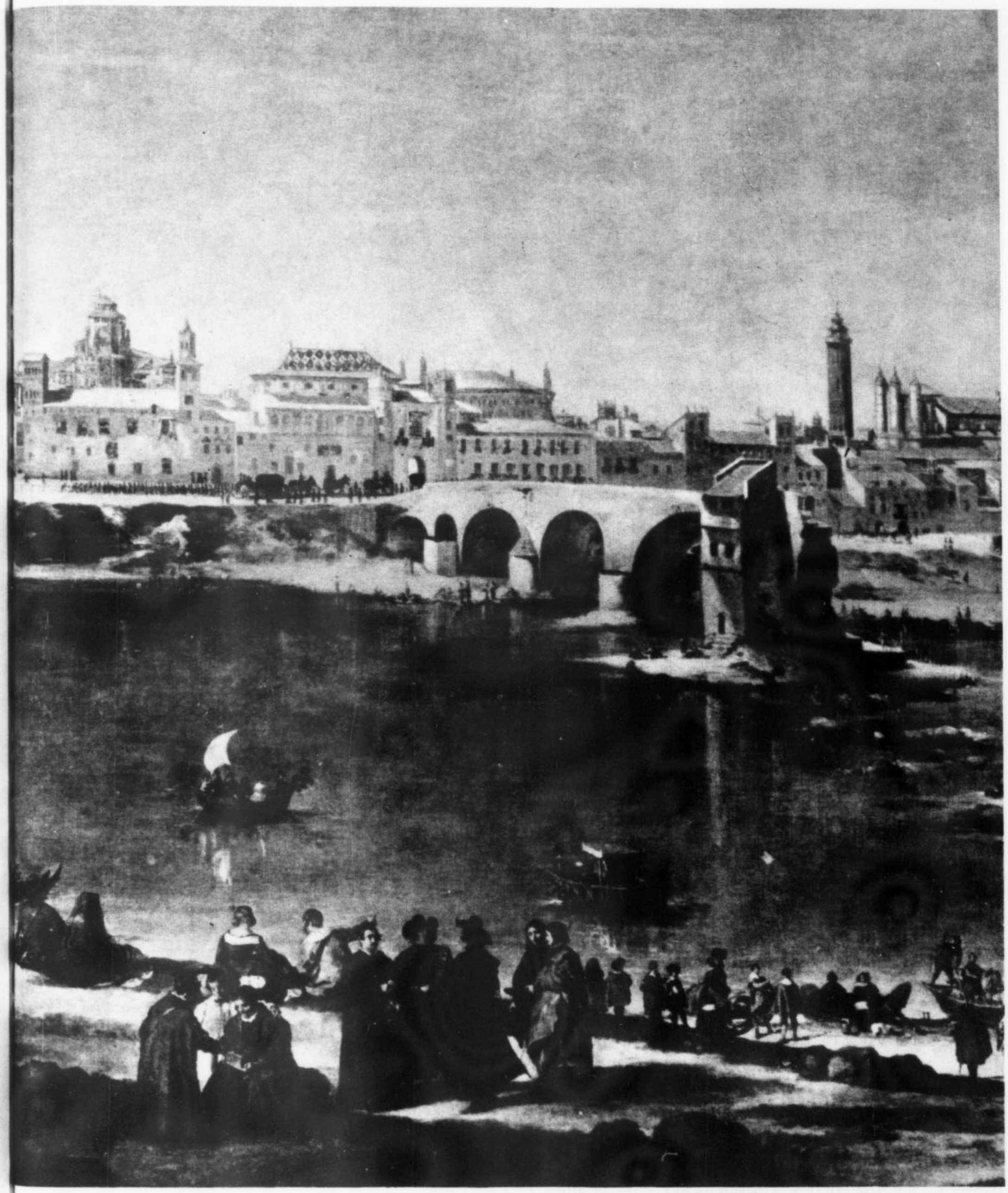
SOUVENIRS OF THE ETERNAL CITY. Velazquez made two visits to Rome, in 1629 and again in 1649-51. He bequeathed to posterity two remarkable souvenirs of his visit to the Eternal City in the form of views of the garden of the Villa Medici, painted on his second visit. The one shown here, which has been named "Noon", shows a landscape full of luminosity in the middle of the day with the sun, very high, filtering through the leaves. Velazquez made much use of the brush point and the contrast of sombre colours of olive green, brown and black in this work. Its companion painting, "Evening", full of melancholy and with a sky of grey clouds, seems to represent an hour of evening peace in the classical garden.





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VIEW OF SARAGOSSA. Although this painting bears a Latin inscription stating that it was completed in 1647 by Juan Bautista del Mazo, Velazquez's son-in-law and pupil, authorities generally agree that Velazquez painted most of the landscape and the striking figures of ladies, gentlemen, beggars, students and merchants which recall those of "The Boar Hunt" (page 12). Velazquez accompanied the court to Saragossa during the war in Catalonia. It is said that Prince Balthasar Carlos himself chose the viewpoint from which the scene was to be painted: the bank of the Ebro on the outskirts of the town, facing the city proper and offering a view of the broken stone bridge (above) and the city's churches and houses. The various groups (details left and following page) are shown going about their everyday tasks. The people and the boats along the river are painted with a freedom of treatment strongly recalling Watteau's "Embarkation for Cythera." Prado Museum.

VELAZQUEZ AND MODERN ART *(Cont'd from page 24)*

DETAIL FROM VIEW OF SARAGOSSA. (Prado Museum)

flowers in the portrait of Margarita wearing a salmon pink and silver dress sparkles with colour—it might have come straight from the brush of Marc Chagall.

But Velazquez has affinities with painters much nearer even to the present day. A great many modern artists have abandoned the representation of objects considering, rightly or wrongly, that photography has relieved them of the task of keeping documentary records. There are people who now look askance at Velazquez's pictures because they are figurative. In fact nothing is simpler than to prove this prejudice unfounded.

We have only to approach one of his works and cut out a fragment here, a sleeve, a piece of farthingale, of wall or of landscape there; and we shall find ourselves confronted with an abstract picture. The beauty of the colours, the free arrangement of the forms and the variety of the pictorial qualities are fully equal to those of any non-figurative picture.

Formerly, quality was held to lie in the ability to imitate in painting, the particular texture of a material—silk, velvet, wood, glass... (The minor Dutch masters, such as Metsu or Terborg, excelled in this respect.) Nowadays, the word quality is used to denote the original beauty of the actual pictorial matter, with its impasto and thin paint effects, smoothness and roughness, lustre and matt passages.

In both these senses, Velazquez's pictures are admirable. Standing a few steps away from one of his portraits, we seem to see the silver and satin of a ceremonial robe; then as we draw nearer, we realize that this effect is obtained by a combination of exquisite colours, transparent and opaque, applied, some lavishly, others in barely perceptible touches, with consummate mastery.

All this raises Velazquez's works above the level of mere illustration to the heights of pure art. What does *The Spinners* represent? According to the learned, a myth (that of Minerva and Arachne) treated with the painter's characteristic realism. But those in search of a subject

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say that it is a tapestry workshop with various women at work whilst in the background visitors look at the finished work; then again, admirers of Impressionist painting see the picture as a treatment of the problem of light and atmosphere, with a dark foreground and a very light background; lovers of abstract art, as a superb play of strokes and colours.

And what about *Las Meninas?* In this famous picture there is a revolutionary change even in the subject matter, in that the King and Queen whose portrait Velazquez is painting are outside the picture (in the place occupied by the spectator), and we only know who they are because there is a mirror in the back of the Salon, which reflects the faces of the King and Queen instead of our own. We are thus enclosed in the atmosphere of the picture to which we add, as it were, another personage.

In the Prado Museum there is, in front of *Las Meninas,* a mirror reflecting, at the same time, both the painted figures and the flesh-and-blood spectators. "But where is the picture?" exclaimed Theophile Gautier, the famous writer and art expert, on seeing this canvas for the first time, for he realized that the real subject was not so much a domestic scene in the Royal Palace as a magnificent depiction of atmospheric and light effects. If we draw nearer, we shall appreciate the exquisite subtlety of its tone values, the freedom and boldness of the brushwork and the beauty and variety of the paint.

Any other of Velazquez's great works prove to be equally "modern" and accessible. This perennial freshness is a quality exclusive to a small number of works of art which are appreciated by each individual and each epoch on different grounds, and always with good reason.

I have tried in this article to describe Velazquez's main qualities, the ones which make us feel that his works belong to our age. But naturally the subject is vast and there is much more to be said. I leave it to each reader to add those reflexions which this special issue may inspire.

Photos Anderson and Boissonas © Editions du Dimanche, from the album "Velazquez"

THE SPINNERS FOUR PAINTINGS IN ONE

"The Spinners" was the last of Velazquez's great composition paintings, completed in 1657, just three years before his death. Ortega y Gasset has called it "the pinnacle" of his works. The architecture of the composition—the sweep of a broad "U"—is the same as that of "Las Meninas" and "Las Lanzas". But here none of the figures is individualized. The forms are reduced to phantom-like splashes of colour in juxtaposition which nevertheless blend to give the effect of vibrating light. Velazquez's technique was an innovation for his age. The Impressionists took this discovery to its extreme, making the elements explode into particules of colour. "The Spinners" in fact is several paintings in one. To some people it is the mythological story of Minerva and Arachne. To those in search of a subject it is a tapestry workshop with women busy in the foreground, and in the background visitors inspecting a finished work. Admirers of Impressionist painting see it as a treatment of problems of light and atmosphere, with a dark foreground and a luminious background. To lovers of abstract art it is a superb play of strokes and colours. The work is now in the Prado Museum.

THE UPS & DOWNS OF FAME

by Juan de Contreras, Marquis of Lozoya

Professor of the History of Art, University of Madrid
and author of "Historia del Arte Hispánico"

Good fortune always attended the affairs of Diego Velazquez. And this year's tercentenary of his death comes at a time when his work is attracting widespread attention throughout the world. His few authentic paintings now fetch fabulous prices and his works are reproduced and commented upon in albums and art books of high standard.

Yet world fame neither came swiftly to Velazquez nor remained constant and unfluctuating as was the case with such artists as Raphael, Titian and Rubens; it has, in fact, known many ups and downs.

During his lifetime, Velazquez enjoyed both in his art and his everyday life the satisfying knowledge that he was greatly esteemed. In his early youth while a student in the celebrated art school of Seville under Francis Pacheco, he was the "favourite" of the noblemen and scholars who were drawn to his master's studio, and the idea of sending him to the Court of Philip IV certainly originated here.

At the Court of the King of Spain, master of the greatest monarchy the world had ever known, the paintings of Velazquez, as the preferred artist of so discriminating a connoisseur as Philip IV, were extolled by the pamphleteers and sung by the poets who abounded in Madrid during the reign of the House of Austria. Velazquez also knew fame abroad. During his second visit to Rome several of his works were exhibited in the portico of Agrippa's Pantheon, and astounded the city's art lovers.

Though the esteem of his contemporaries was undoubtedly the most powerful stimulus in the artist's life, the practical effects were limited and transitory. The immediate impact of Velazquez's work was slight and short-lived even in Spain itself, where only a few of his pupils, such as Juan del Mazo, continued his style of painting for a brief period. Outside the Peninsula he exerted no influence whatsoever.

Velazquez lived at a time when the power of the Spanish monarchy was in decline. Spain withdrew into herself, allowing the glory of Louis XIV to spread over Europe. With Louis XIV came the triumph of official "Academy" art. With the kings of the Bourbon dynasty in Madrid came French and Italian painters—Rano, Houasse, Van Loo, Giaquinto, Amiconi, Tiepolo and many others—and the surviving heirs of the old Spanish school were completely ignored.

Thus the art circles of the 18th century were unaware of the work of the genius of Seville, for most of his paintings remained locked away in the palaces of Madrid and Vienna. No more than a few were glimpsed by some discerning minds and aroused interest. One great painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, declared the portrait of Pope Innocent X to be the finest painting in Rome.

The works of Velazquez became better known and appreciated in the 19th century following their dispersal during the Peninsula War. Yet the Spanish painter who enjoyed the most esteem among critics and collectors during the first half of that century was Murillo. But then travel became easier and it was possible to study and copy the pictures of Velazquez hanging in the Prado and the galleries of London and Vienna.

During the second half of the 19th century, when realism predominated in art and literature, critics and artists came to realize that, in terms of placing subjects in an authentic setting, of illuminating them with true and natural light and of capturing the essential qualities of objects, Diego Velazquez was the greatest painter of all times.

It has been said that all who painted well at that period had learned from him. Solomon Reinach went so far as to say, in a work as well known as his "Apollo", which became a textbook in every European art school, that from the professional point of view Velazquez represented the summit of world painting.

Towards the turn of the century, interest in Velazquez's paintings began to decline. Critics and painters, strongly influenced by contemporary literature, found the Spanish painter cold and lacking in emotion; they would concede only that he was a superb exponent of "photographic art". Among the artists of the Spanish school the long-forgotten El Greco became the favourite painter and within a decade his renown had spread with astonishing rapidity among all art lovers. This period too marked the beginning of the world-wide acclaim for Francisco Goya.

In our own time when art is exclusively preoccupied by the balance of volumes and masses and by chromatic harmonies, the paintings of Velazquez, who resolved these problems in incomparable fashion three centuries ago, are being studied with growing interest.

Three centuries after Velazquez, another Andalusian artist, Pablo Ruiz Picasso, has taken *Las Meninas,* and in a totally different atmosphere, dissected the composition in a series of more than 50 paintings.

THE UNESCO COURIER wishes to thank Editions du Dimanche, Paris, for making available many of the black and white reproductions of the works of Velazquez published in this special issue. These reproductions are taken from a remarkable album, "Velazquez", prepared for Editions du Dimanche by the late Anna Marsan (Text by Léon-Paul Fargue) and printed in 1946.

VELAZQUEZ COLOUR SLIDES

An important exhibition of the works of Velazquez, assembled from many countries, opens in Madrid on December 3 to mark the 300th anniversary of the death of the Spanish artist. The exhibition will continue until February 28, 1961.

For this occasion the Spanish National Commission for Unesco has undertaken, in conjunction with Publications Filmées d'Art et d'Histoire, the publication of a collection of coloured slides of Velazquez's work.

The slides are presented in plastic boxes, each consisting of 20 framed slides (5×5 cms) of works photographed at the Prado Museum, Madrid, and in other countries. Each box is accompanied by a booklet written by Enrico Lafuente Ferrari, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, Madrid.

The collections will be available before the end of the year in three language editions: English, French and Spanish. The price of each box in France and other countries (carriage paid) is 30 NF or equivalent. A special price of 25 NF applies to educational and cultural institutions. In the U.S.A. and Canada the price is $9 U.S.; in Australia, £ A4.

The Velazquez colour slides will be on sale at the Unesco Gift Shop, Place de Fontenoy, Paris, and at the Madrid exhibitions. ORDERS SHOULD NOT BE SENT TO UNESCO. For further information or to order by post, write to Publications Filmées d'Art et d'Histoire, 44, rue du Dragon, Paris (6e).

RAPID STROKES of brown and gold reveal Velazquez's technique in this detail of "The Jester, Antonio The Englishman". Antonio, a dwarf, carries a hat decorated with long white plumes and in the full painting is seen beside a huge dog, almost as high as himself. Prado Museum.

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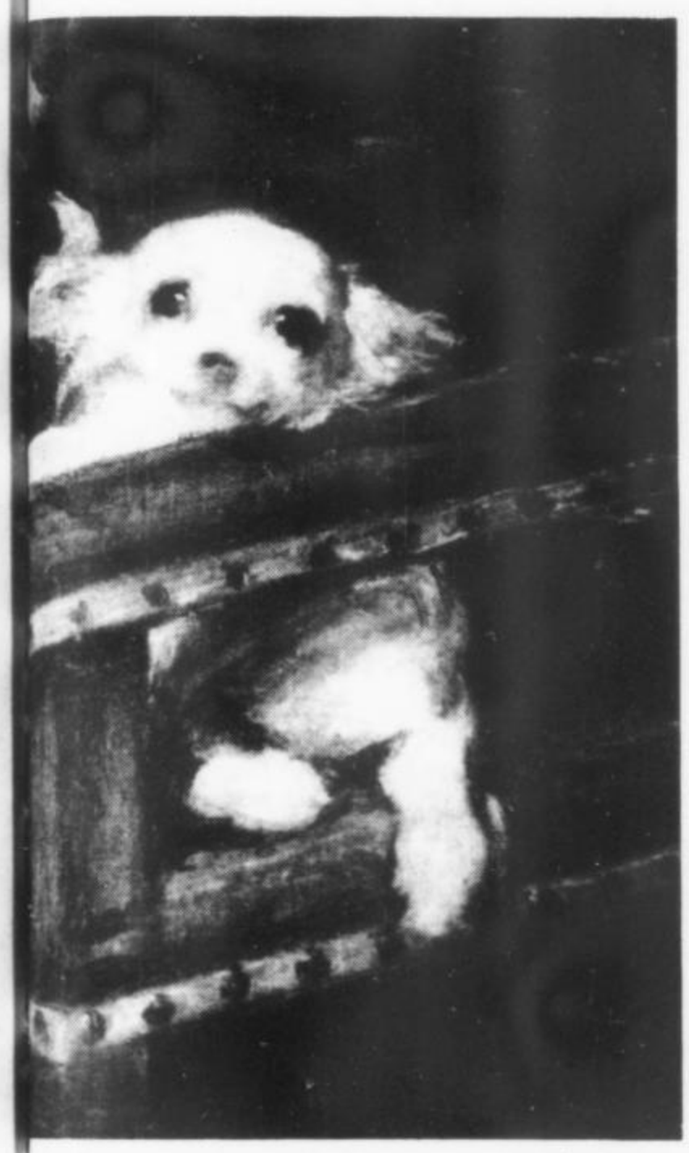
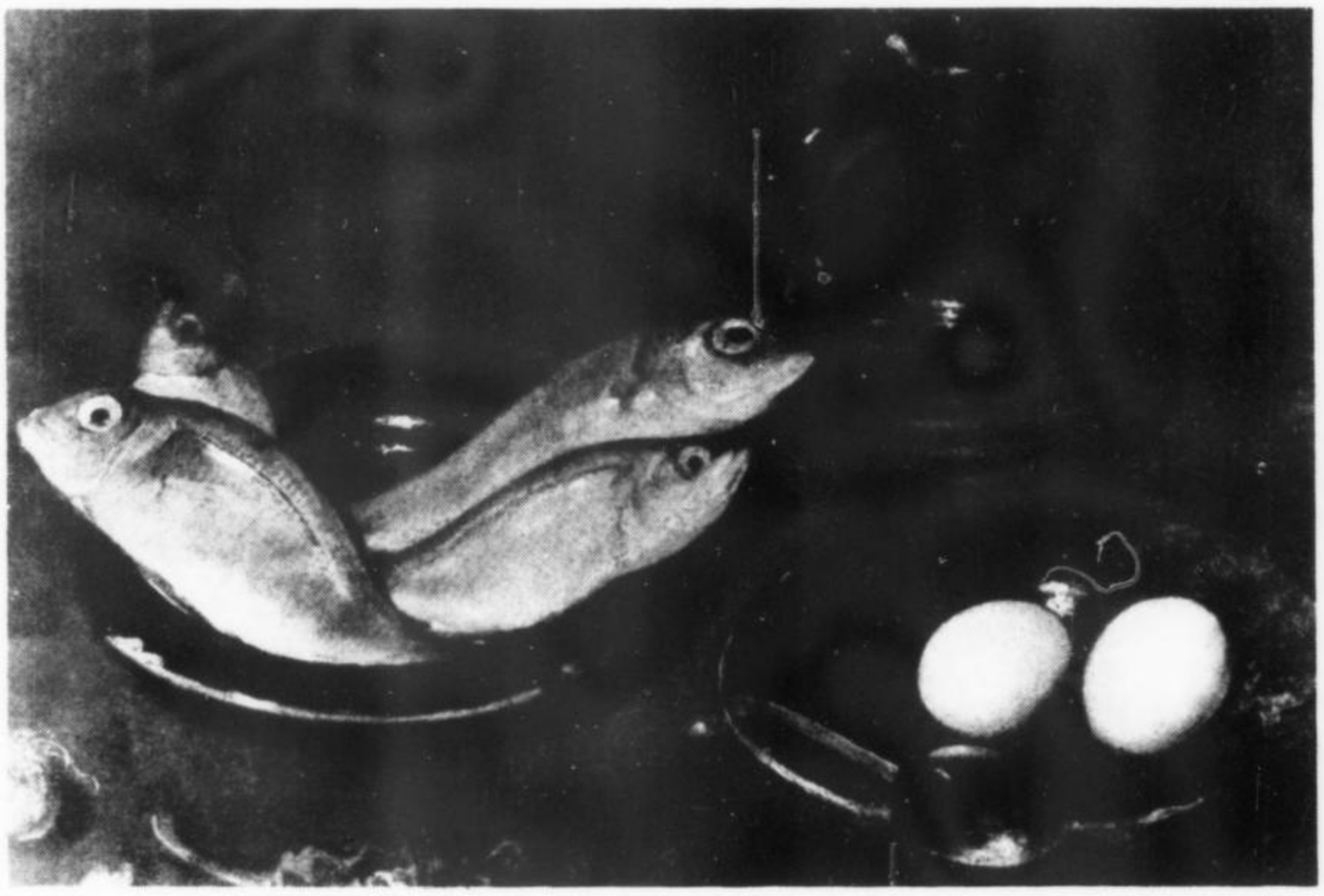


LITTLE WHITE DOG is a detail from a portrait of Prince Philip Prosper of Spain which was painted by Velazquez in 1659. Vienna Museum.

Dominguez-Garcia, Madrid



STILL LIFE STUDY is a detail from Velazquez's "Christ in the House of Martha". Velazquez situated his painting in the kitchen of the house with a woman and young girl attending to the preparation of a meal. The religious subject, Christ talking to Martha and Mary, he placed in the background as a picture hanging on the kitchen wall. Now in the National Gallery, London.

Anderson © Editions du Dimanche, from the album "Velazquez"

Anderson © Editions du Dimanche, from the album "Velazquez"

SURRENDER OF BREDA. Detail of the great composition painting (1635) published in our centre page which is widely regarded as one of the greatest historical works in European painting. From the heads of the Spanish and Dutch leaders to the vast landscape with the fires of Breda smoking on the horizon, the work is one of striking originality. It reveals a gayer and richer use of colours than Velazquez had hitherto employed. Velazquez was inspired to paint the surrender scene after he had travelled to Italy with General Spinola, the Spanish commander, in 1629. Prado Museum.

THE MAN IN THE TREASURE TOWER OF THE ALCAZAR

by F.J. Sanchez Canton

Director, Prado Museum, Madrid

WE are indebted to Ortega y Gasset for a number of apt, though at times extreme comments on Velazquez which, by virtue of the philosopher's authority and the magic of his style, have helped to establish the currently accepted view of the man and the artist.

The chief points Ortega y Gasset makes are these :

- *The life of Velazquez was one of the simplest that a human being has ever lived ;*
- *As far as can be ascertained, only one important event marked his life : his appointment as the King's painter... when he was only twenty-four ;*
- *It is not clear whether (his life) was that of a painter or of a gentleman of the Court ;*
- *Deep down in his heart, he was driven by one pervading thought — to become a nobleman... but this road was closed to him ;*
- *At the very threshhold of his youth he discovered the most extraordinary gift for art... Nevertheless, he did not want and never wanted to be a painter ;*

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POPE INNOCENT X. Few paintings have aroused such instantaneous enthusiam as the seated portrait of Innocent X which Velazquez did in Rome in 1650. The Pontiff was 76 at the time. Velazquez made no attempt to flatter his features, but revealed him to us with implacable objectivity, yet with dignity and grandeur. Schopenhauer saw in the painting the "majesty of the earth" and Reynolds pronounced it "the finest picture in Rome" and condescended to copy it. The painting is remarkable not only for the vividness and vigour of the face and eyes, but also for the masterly harmonizing of crimson, white and gold. Illustration shows detail of the head. The painting now hangs in the Doria Pamphili Gallery, Rome.

● *He is a painter who distinguishes himself by the smallness of his output... I maintain that no painter had more time to paint.*

In addition, Ortega asserts that Velazquez did not finish his canvasses.

These isolated quotations from the philosopher's conclusions raise many problems. Without wishing to cross swords with him, I should like to set forth very briefly facts and considerations concerning them so that the reader can judge for himself as to the nature of this extraordinary artist.

It may seem unnecessary to go into the question of Velazquez's physical appearance and personality, since we know what he looked like from portraits of him and have some insight into his personality not only from his works of art but also from what his contemporaries wrote about him.

"He did portraits of himself on various occasions", wrote the Spanish art critic and painter Palomino in 1724, basing his statement on the biography of Alfaro, a disciple of Velazquez. Yet a careful study of the supposed self-portraits of the artist reveals that they do not portray the same person.

IN point of fact there is only one self-portrait which can be regarded as authentic, the one in *Las Meninas*. He is also shown with his back to us in a painting, entitled *The Mazo Family*, which is the work of another artist. Velazquez is here seen painting the portrait of the Infanta Dona Margarita.

And what, one may ask, of the portrait of Velazquez in *The Surrender of Breda*, and the heads and half-length portraits also said to represent him ?

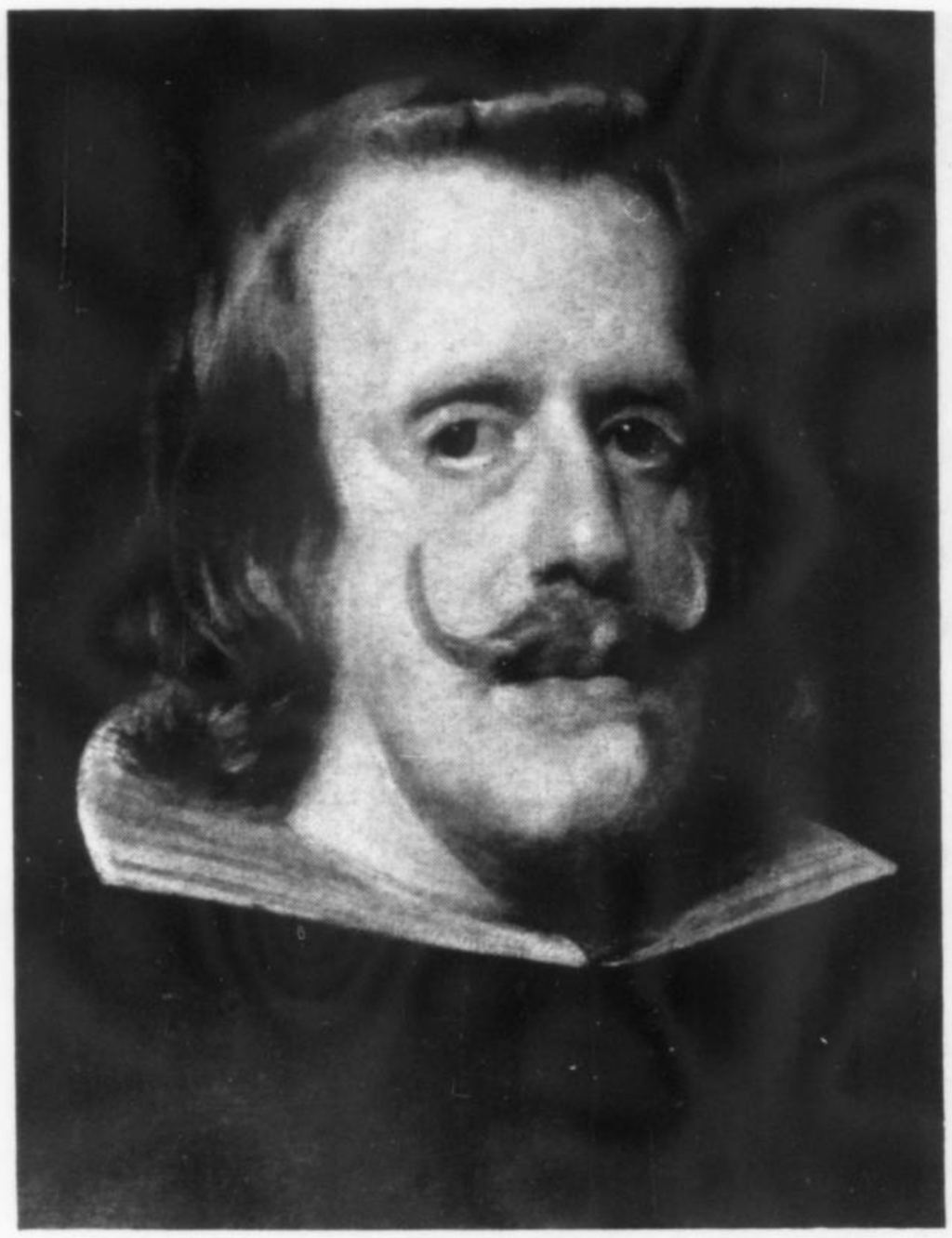
The light-skinned, fair-haired young man who is seen between the horse and the right-hand edge of the canvas in the *Surrender of Breda* (see centre pages) cannot be Velazquez who twenty years later depicted himself as swarthy, with jet-black hair in *Las Meninas*. Nor do the two figures have the same nose.

The slight resemblance may be explained by the similarity to be found between people who dress in the same fashion and by the fact that Juan Velazquez, the artist's brother, with whom he perhaps shared some physical likenesses, may have been the model for the portrait. As for the other portraits referred to, including the one in the Valencia Museum, these are accepted by scholars only with great reservation.

If we take as our guide the two undisputed pictures of Velazquez, we note that he appears as a slightly-built man, not more than five feet three inches tall and well-proportioned. His large head seems even more massive because of the crop of thick, long hair. His eyes, neither deep-set nor prominent, look out beneath a rounded forehead and well-spaced, arched eyebrows. Beneath his fleshy nose is a broad mouth with protruding lower lip, a thick moustache and a strong chin.

At the age of fifty-seven, he had neither the grey hair nor wrinkles of advancing age, and three years later, if we are to judge from the painting in Vienna, he was still a fine figure of a man and of such bearing that the Venetian poet Boschini wrote of him :

Cavalier che spirava un gran decoro
Quanto ogn'altra autorevole persona

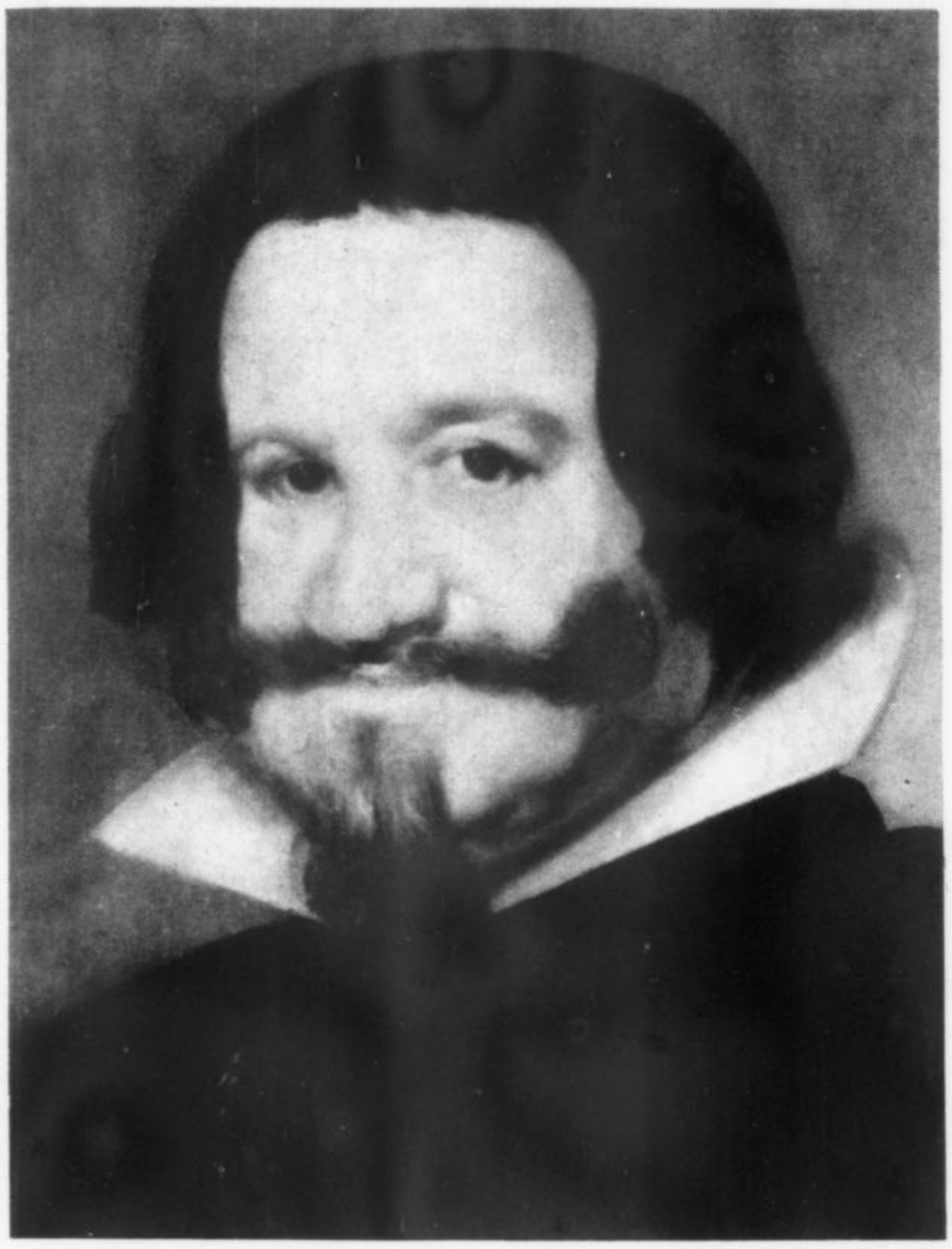


Prado Museum, Madrid

King Philip IV, painted in 1656. Prado Museum.

Domingeuz-Garcia, Madrid

The Infanta Margarita, in blue. 1659. Vienna Museum.



Hermitage Museum, Moscow

The Duke of Olivares. About 1638-40. Hermitage Museum.

Dominguez-Garcia, Madrid

Prince Balthasar Carlos. About 1640-42. Vienna Museum.

(A gentleman with an air of great dignity
like all persons of high degree).

The personal distinction of Velazquez was heightened by the care with which he dressed. Six suits of clothes, various accessories and eleven hats are mentioned in the inventory of his possessions drawn up after his death.

The only woman in Velazquez's life about which anything is known is his wife Juana de Miranda, the daughter of his art teacher, who was not yet seventeen when he married her just before his nineteenth birthday. Their marriage lasted throughout their lives and both died within a week of each other.

Did Velazquez ever paint his devoted and self-effacing wife ?

In all likelihood, she posed before their marriage for the Virgin in *The Immaculate Conception* and, as a young bride, for two religious works, *The Adoration of the Magi* and *Saint Ildefonso Donning the Chasuble*. She is also thought to have been the model for *Head in Profile* which is in the Lazaro Museum, Madrid, and *The Sybil* or *The Painter's Wife,* now in the Prado. In the background of the Vienna canvas, she is seen walking towards Velazquez accompanied by a grandchild. She is a silhouette, a mere shadow in this work, but was she, in fact, anything more than a shadow in the painter's household, more than a quiet island in the stormy sea of the Court ?

VELAZQUEZ appears to have led a sober and reserved life. Nevertheless, there were three women who interested and perhaps fascinated him, the models for his *Venus and Cupid, The Spinners* and *The Lady with a Fan*—all of them unknown.

In examining the list of books in Velazquez's personal library we are surprised by the absence of certain authors and the presence of others. Certain works are exactly what one would expect to find there, and all in all they enable us to break through the artist's reserve. The list contains 156 titles, only one of which is religious. But the fact is that his library included very few literary works either : one novel, not a particularly good one at that, an anthology of poetry, Spanish translations of Horace, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* a volume in Italian of Petrarch and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

Philosophy was represented by Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*. The only volumes of history in the collection were classical works by Livy and Quintus Curcius Rufus, a book on the Flemish wars and two or three other unidentified titles.

This dearth is compensated for by the abundance of treatises on painting and sculpture (including Leonardo da Vinci's *Art of Painting* published in Paris in 1651) and an equal number of volumes on architecture. In addition there were many works on arithmetic, geometry and perspective, a knowledge of which is basic to the art of drawing. The professional side of his library also contained at least four treatises on anatomy as well as Albrecht Durer's *Symmetry of the Human Body* and works on archaeology, mythology and iconology.

It was to be expected that such books would be found on his shelves when on August 29, 1660 the executors of Velazquez's will drew up their inventory of his vault-ceiling appartment in the Treasure Tower of the Alcazar Palace at Madrid. The library was one befitting a cultivated artist.

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JOSEPH'S COAT. Detail of a work painted in Rome in 1630 together with "The Forge of Vulcan", both pictures marking the end of the first period in Velazquez's art. The painter was at this time influenced by the Italian masters whose works he had studied in Venice. Escorial Palace, Madrid.

Prado Museum, Madrid

THE FOUNTAIN OF THE TRITONS. Another detail full of grace and elegance of this composition—one of Velazquez's last works (see page 23). The gallant and his lady who is seated close to the fountain, might easily be taken for figures from some of the gay scenes painted by Watteau. Prado Museum.

But the executors also found on the shelves other books which give us a glimpse of Velazquez's more intimate tastes and interests. Concern with questions of health may account for the presence of several books on medicine and health administration and another entitled *Treasure of the Poor*.

Surprising in so clear-minded a man as Velazquez, however, is his apparent interest in "the arts that should not be studied" (*las artes non cumplidores*) and hence the presence in his library of almanacs, calendars and books on the movement of the planets. It is even stranger to come upon Giovanni Battista della Porta's *On Physiognomy* and Jean Taisnier's *Art of Divination and Introduction to Astrology*.

FROM the time he entered the king's service as court artist and portrait painter, Velazquez's relations with Philip IV developed rapidly into a friendship which was not to end until the artist's death. Although remuneration in the royal household was always insufficient and overdue, Velazquez's situation was improved by successive royal favours.

It is commonly, though incorrectly, asserted that the non-artistic activities involved in Velazquez's various functions took up too much of his time. Inasmuch as there exist many documents pertaining to this sphere of his activity, there can be no doubt that the time employed in such prosaic, bureaucratic tasks was not to the detriment of his painting. If he was not a prolific artist it was because of his phlegmatic temperament, his studiousness, his meditative nature and the great pains he took in the practise of his art.

His relations with the court and the king's protection must have rekindled the pretension to nobility of the ancient da Silva family of Oporto and have aroused envy among painters and courtiers.

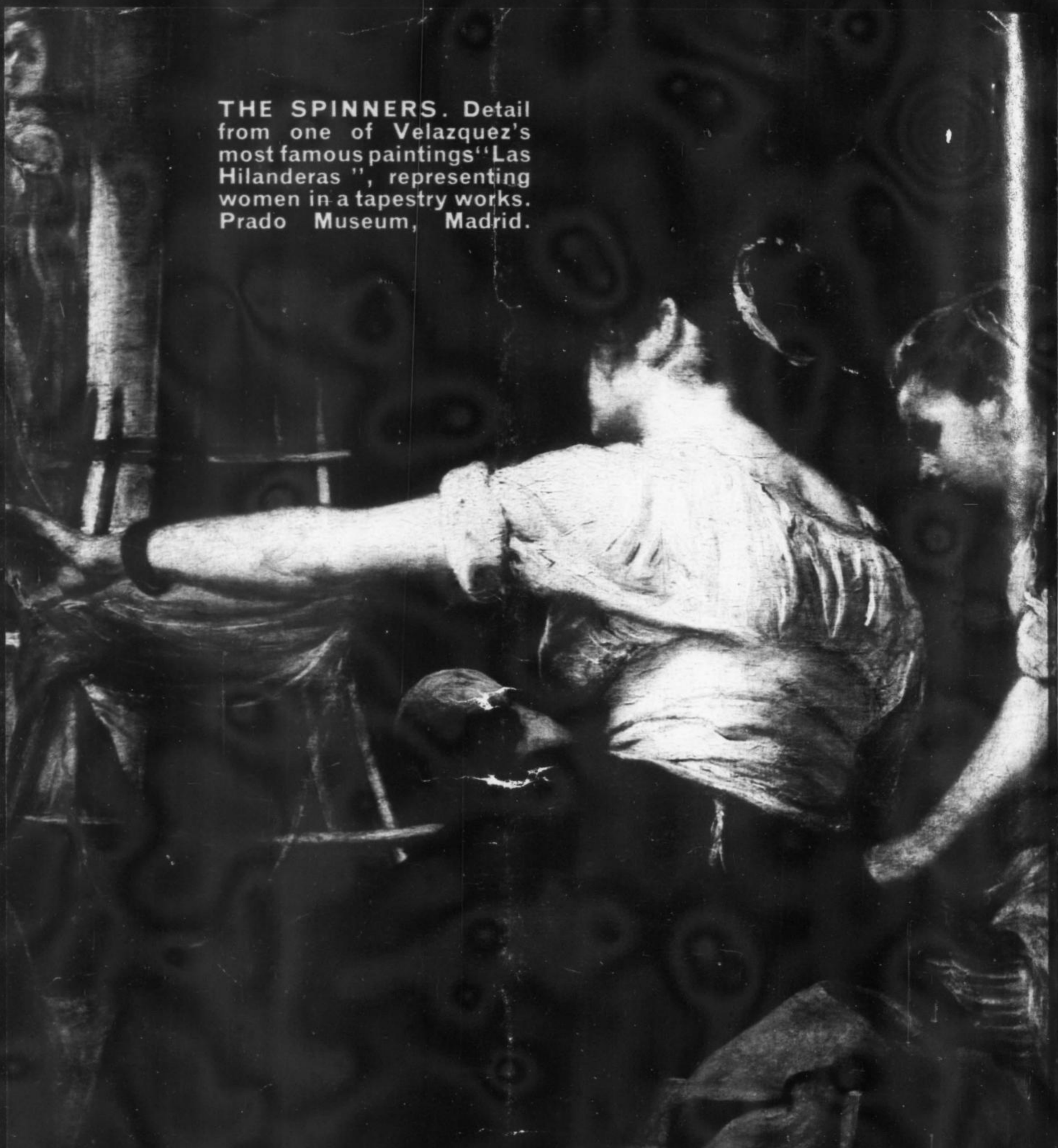
His association with noblemen and dignitaries heightened the artist's desire to rise in the social scale, and he never lacked royal favour. The decree—"I appoint Velazquez"—which Phillip IV wrote in the margin of the report submitted by the Palace Council for the appointment of a gentleman usher (the decree ran counter to the recommendation of all its members); and his order: "Set down that his quality is evident to me" with which the monarch put an end to the doubts of the authorities who had investigated Velazquez's qualifications for admission to the Military Order of Saint James, were energetic, perhaps arbitrary acts which revealed the king's singular admiration and affection.

Velazquez responded to such marked favour with loyal service and took great care that his conduct and style of life be in keeping with that of the perfect courtier, a man worthy of attaining the "highest honours", as Palomino put it. This explains why his library contained works on courtiers, knighthood, the art of archery and hunting, and why in keeping with his wish to become an accomplished courtier he wished to live like a gentleman and be surrounded by fine furniture, jewels, tapestries and books.

Imp. GEORGES LANG, PARIS. IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE.

PRINCE BALTHASAR CARLOS ON HORSEBACK. Portrait painted about 1634 of the son of King Philip IV of Spain, patron and friend of Velazquez. Now in the Prado Museum.

Imp. GEORGES LANG, PARIS. IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE.



THE SPINNERS. Detail from one of Velazquez's most famous paintings "Las Hilanderas ", representing women in a tapestry works. Prado Museum, Madrid.